**Pauvre Bête**

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# Pauvre Bête

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Summary

Will's father resurfaced like a log on a swamp, and he smelled almost as bad. He appeared like the devil, called forth by the mention of his name.

"Tell me about your father, Will," Hannibal had said, the faint ticking of the clock on the desk keeping time with Will's pulse.

Notes

trigger warnings are as follows:
mentions of rape, violence, murder, terminal illness, death of a parent, unconsensual drugging, and incest, and manipulation. Also cannibalism, obviously.

if you think you may like to read this, but don't know if there's a trigger for you in here, please feel free to ask me if there is, and i'll guide you on how to avoid it.

This fic has been translated into Chinese here.

# Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

> the wonderful IvanaeSilvia made a beautiful gifset of beau and will's quantico meeting from the first chapter right here. thank you darling!

Will's father resurfaced like a log on a swamp, and he smelled almost as bad. He appeared like the devil, called forth by the mention of his name.

"Tell me about your father, Will," Hannibal had said, the faint ticking of the clock on the desk keeping time with Will's pulse.

Will shrugged as casually as he could, his fingers twining into the half shredded seam of his jeans. He had dragged them on earlier while simultaneously chasing Angel and chastising her as she padded onto a sleeping Winston's back and nosed between his legs.

He hadn't noticed how worn they were until now, sitting in Hannibal's expensive chair. Hannibal didn't press him, but nor did he seem to accept Will's shrug as a response, so the silence grew between them, stretching taut like wire until Will had to snap it.

"I haven't seen him in a long time," Will said, and he found that once he had spoken it was easier to keep going. But Hannibal spoke before Will could find his next words.

"Is he dead?" Hannibal queried, and it was almost rude, but Will was shaking his head before he had even finished speaking.

"No. I don't think so, at least. A man like that, he'll outlive us all, spite'll keep him alive," Will said. Hannibal simply watched him, so he pressed on.

"My father has never been a good man. Um, I don't-" Will almost moved to correct himself, to cover for his father, almost twenty years of training kicking in like an awful survival instinct.

"I don't know," he finished lamely, and he had found himself standing, moving to a painting near the window. He pretended to examine it while his eyes traced over the silhouetted reflection of Hannibal in the frame, standing slow and smooth, approaching him from behind like a shadow.

It was half an informal staff meeting, half an interrogation in the halls of Quantico. Beverly hung out of the lab, unashamedly eavesdropping while Zeller and Price at least had the decency to pretend not to listen while Jack lost his temper in the hall. Will watched the

ground near Beverly's feet, her white lab sneakers cast a faint glow against the tile - while Jack ranted about Will's misstep with Lounds.

Will understood, faintly, that he was not good at dealing with her, but even he could admit that he had taken a step too far when he cursed her out at a crime scene in front of locals. Jack was furious, though she grinned at him, all flashing lights and flaming hair as she sniggered at his outburst.

Will was undoubtedly not at his best. So, when his father called his name, Will didn't respond immediately, his history leading him to assume he was having an auditory hallucination. Will was very aware that if he turned to look and was seen to ignore Jack in favour of a hallucination he would not be impressing upon anyone his dedication to the cause. Which is why it took so long for Will to respond.

"Will? Will? Boy!"

"...daddy?" Will said automatically, frozen to the ground quite still in shock as his father approached him, his work boots stamping harsh, echoing stomps along the tile. Jack had finally quieted, but all this appeared to do was draw Zeller and Price out of the sanctum of the lab to peer at the dusty figure his father cut, a sharp contrast to the shining cleanliness of Quantico.

"How'd you get in here?" Will regretted this the moment the words left his mouth because though his father's eyes didn't narrow, or his lips turn down, there was a faint tightness about the mouth that let Will know he had misstepped.

"I called your friend and she let me know where you was," Beau Graham said, a nerve jumping subtly in his jaw. "Bloom, her name was. Told her I was your daddy and she brought me on in," he said, with a note of finality that discouraged questions, which let Will know that if this was true at all, Beau had given Alana the slip to wander the halls unsupervised.

Abruptly, Beau opened his arms, his square fingers fanning to either side dramatically as he gestured.

"Come give your daddy a hug," he said, and his tone brooked no arguments.

Out of habit, Will went to him, conscious of the heavy eyes of Jack, Price, Zeller and Bev on his back. He wrapped his arms around his dad's waist automatically while his father embraced him, one arm folding around his waist, the other curling fondly over his shoulder so his hand could rest in Will's hair.

He squeezed and Will dropped his arms and stepped back too quickly, his father's hands couldn't drop gracefully enough.

The swift swing of his hands downwards when Will left his arms was a reminder that he had made yet another mistake, disappointed his dad yet again. The child in him scrambled to rectify, to heal wounds, so he stepped back and breathed deep.

"This is my father, Beau Graham," he said. "Daddy, this is Jack Crawford, Beverly Katz and-" Zeller and Price pulled back before he could make the introduction, rudely disappearing into the lab, no doubt to discuss the gossip of Will's dad. Will found the corners of his own mouth tightening as he watched them scramble.

Beau stepped to Jack first and held his hand out. Will abruptly felt small and increasingly bitter at this. Jack and Beau were of a similar build and height and Beau shook Jack's hand with a tone of respect. Jack was gruff and distracted when he returned the greeting, but Beau didn't much seem to mind the fact that he was clearly interrupting.

He held a hand out to Beverly next and when Bev went to shake it, he took his fingers tightly and pressed a dry kiss to the top of her hand. She regarded him with a faint look of confusion and mild distaste. She took her hand back and folded her arms, her shoulder leaning heavy on the doorframe.

"So you're Will's dad, huh? I uh...Can't really say I see the resemblance," Beverly said, the corner of her mouth quirking.

"Takes after his mother," Beau said offhandedly, but Will could tell the comment had stung whatever paternal part of Beau that lay dormant inside him.

His hand lifted as though he sought to ruffle Will's curls, so Will sidestepped him neatly, leaning against the wall. Slighted again in front of strangers, a storm brewed in Beau that only Will could see, and he regretted moving.

"He needs a haircut," Beau said, as if he were talking to Beverly. But the sideways look he shot Will was consuming and entirely terrifying. "Look a damn girl with all those curls," Beau said and Will ducked his head, a faint movement of dropping chin to cover throat.

Quiet disgust coiled in his belly when he shielded his soft parts out of sheer animal instinct, that prey instinct that never seemed to end.

# Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The weight of the silver container slung from side to side as the juice bottle inside upset the balance. Hannibal swapped hands neatly, fixing the equilibrium while he knocked on Will's door with his free hand.

From inside came faint rustling noises, and the swift clatter of clawed paws on the wooden floor. Hannibal waited politely, but took a moment to examine an unfamiliar wind chime on the porch of Will's house. It rattled gently in the wind, its circular shape faintly reminiscent of a circus tent.

The noise was pleasant, if mildly irritating, but abruptly the door swung open and an unfamiliar man leaned out. His hip catching on the doorframe, the man rested his hand high above his head and peered out.

"Howdy," the tall man said, unironically, and nodded at Hannibal. He leaned back for a moment to call into the house, his voice gratingly rough.
"Baby, ya got a visitor."

Hannibal took a moment to observe him, his authoritarian stance, the way his large body took up the whole doorway, his scuffed workboots indoors, the Louisiana drawl. His hair was faintly curling over his ears, shot through with more salt than pepper, and his eyes weren't the sunny blue of Will's, they were a dark, cold brown, but they had the same thick black lashes.

"You must be Will's father," Hannibal said. The noise of dogs nosing at the door doubled suddenly as Will approached and pushed his way through the pack and his father.

"Hannibal, come on in," Will said. He took the weighty container from Hannibal's hand before introducing him, a charmingly backward display of manners.
"Daddy, this is Doctor Hannibal Lecter, Hannibal - " At this Will placed the container on his kitchen counter. "This's my daddy, Beau."

Hannibal neatly tucked his jacket over his arm and offered Beau his hand. When he shook, Beau's skin was dry and wind chapped, his grip deliberately firm. He jerked his head toward the container on Will's counter demandingly.

"What'd you bring?" He inquired and Hannibal dropped his hand, and folded it under his coat neatly.

"Hannibal makes treats for the dogs," Will said.

"It's an efficient use of any meat offcuts that I would not use, that would otherwise go to waste," Hannibal said.

“What are they this week?” Will asked.

“Liver jerky, and peanut butter balls,” Hannibal said, opening the container and removing the vacuum sealed packages. “There is also a bottle of apple juice in here for you, the tree at the edge of my land has begun to bear fruit.”

“You got a lot of leftover peanut butter offcuts?” Beau said dryly, and Will ducked his head. Hannibal allowed a small sigh.

“I noticed a new wind chime outside, Will, it’s very interesting,” Hannibal said.

“I made it for him,” Beau interrupted. Will backed away automatically when Beau approached, but he played it off relatively smoothly by starting coffee on the other side of the kitchen.

“An unusual material to work in,” Hannibal pointed out. While it would be immensely interesting to stand close to Will, back him into the corner and force him to choose between withstanding Hannibal’s closeness, or his father’s, Hannibal wished to engender a safer path for Will to choose himself. So, he retreated, allowing Will the freedom to move in a wider, more open space. Will poured coffee.

“Yeah, well, it’s meaningful,” Beau said, taking the first cup of coffee poured. He added nothing to it, but tipped it faintly in Will’s direction as thanks before sipping.

“Fish bones and dog teeth,” Hannibal mused. “A faintly macabre offering.”

“So is liver,” Beau said. A moment of silence stretched between them before Beau broke it.

“The teeth are from Sprinkles, the first stray Will adopted,” Beau said. “He passed on a couple years ago and I been keeping the teeth, meaning to make somethin’ for Will. Carved up the fish bone from some catfish I caught before-” Beau stopped talking abruptly, sucking down his coffee hard even as it steamed from the cup.

“Before?” Hannibal pushed.

“Before I went to prison,” Beau finished. The line of his neck was firm as he tipped up his chin and for a moment Hannibal saw a flash of an attractive younger man, smaller, slimmer, gentler, and he saw Will in him.

“I see,” Hannibal said neutrally. “It’s a fascinating piece.”

When Hannibal was on the way out, Will swiped a book from the small hall table by the front door. Hannibal put on his coat, and Will pressed a copy of *Where The Red Fern Grows* into Hannibal’s hands.

“I remembered when we talked about it-”

“Yes, you mentioned it was one of your favourites as a child,” Hannibal agreed.

“- and you mentioned you wanted to read it, so,” Will said, shrugging faintly.

“How kind of you,” Hannibal said softly, tucking the copy under his arm.

“It was no big deal, I just came upon it in town and thought, you know,” Will mumbled. Hannibal had not the heart to tell him he had a better copy of the novel in his library. The more touching idea was that Will was thinking of him when he was not around.

“Would you sign it?” Hannibal asked. “Whenever I receive a book as a gift, I like to have the giver sign their name and date it on the inside cover.”

“Ok,” Will said, already digging for a pen in a messy drawer, half filled with junk. Hannibal gave him his own pen from his inner pocket, and Will took it, and paused before writing.

Hannibal waited politely. He drove until he got to the exit for town, then he pulled over to read the scribbled inscription.
It held a quote from the novel in Will’s scratchy handwriting.

***“I looked at his grave and, with tears in my eyes, I voiced these words: "You were worth it, old friend, and a thousand times over.”***
Hannibal.
Don’t think I’m macabre.

Will Graham.”

Hannibal sat for some time, simply holding the book in his hands.

Chapter End Notes

I think of Beau as an older, rougher, Jeffrey Dean Morgan.

# Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

tw: for mentions of rape, cannibalism, and spiders.

Will had an infinitely pleasing way of saying Hannibal's name, a long breath bouncing from the back of the tongue on the first syllable, a quick tap of the second and a pleasant rounding of the mouth on the last.

It transformed a strong name frequently mashed to mush by American tongues into an attractive exhale of softness. So, Hannibal felt some regret that he called him only Doctor Lecter within his office, though Hannibal couldn't spite him for it. It was polite.

Yet, he thought as he opened the door to his office and welcomed Will in for therapy, it was still a faint disappointment to not hear the lovely exhalation of his first name when Will spoke.

Hannibal found he could be quite happy if Will ended or began his every sentence with Hannibal's name.

The soft curl of the armchair around his back made Will's skin perspire. The chair was so deep and plush that the small of his back gathered clean sweat as he squirmed under Hannibal's therapy.

"Garret Jacob Hobbes has...haunted me," Will said softly.

"You find yourself consumed with morality, Will, often to your detriment. Killing Hobbes has begun a transformation of that morality, one which your trained mind cannot comprehend," Hannibal mused.

"He follows me," Will whispered, as though imparting a great and terrible secret.

"In empathising with him, you allowed him inside your brain. It is you who now must disallow him."

"I empathised more with his daughter," Will said. "I was both of them, but it's Abigail who remains, caught in my teeth and fingernails. I see Hobbes, but I don't just see his death, or me killing him, I see him with his daughter. I see Hobbes in everything I do, it's Abigail I see in everything I am."

Hannibal folded his hands in his lap, and did not press on. Will inhaled deeply, the smell of furniture polish and the crackling fire pleasantly warm and private. Almost domestic.

“I empathised with Abigail for a particular reason,” Will allowed.

“You understand what is like to have a father who wants to hurt you,” Hannibal said, softly but firmly. Will stood, unconsciously retracing his steps, a familiar circular pattern he tracked into the floor.

“I understand what it is like to have a father who wants to hurt you, but will not allow himself to. I understand what it’s like to be at the other end of an obsessive focus, of a great, and terrible love. I understand what it’s like to see your father hurt people, because they look like you, and he won’t hurt you. It’s a… It’s a strange kind of...relief. A combination of fear, and safety, and fear of that very safety.”

“What was your father jailed for, Will?”

“Rape.”

“It’s a strange sort of intimacy, knowing that your father wants to hurt you. Knowing how he wants to hurt you,” Will said. “Knowing that he won’t, because he loves you.”

“Tell me about your father’s arrest,” Hannibal said.

“One of the boys killed himself,” Will said softly. “He left a note beside a cooling corpse. He slit his wrists on his bed, and bled out. I heard his mother came home and found him, and read the note. And before she went to the police, or called anyone, she got a shotgun and went to find my dad. She shot him, but the gun was filled with rock salt, and she just sprayed his chest, his shoulder. Marked him up badly, hurt him, but she didn’t kill him. I don’t know if she was trying to or not.”

“Do you wish she had?”

Will was silent for such a long time that Hannibal began to compose another question mentally.

“It would be easier, if she had. But I don’t think so. I would have mourned if she had killed him.”

“Mourned the loss of your father, or mourned the loss of opportunity?”

“Opportunity?”

“Crab spiders, when they hatch, feed on eggs laid by their mother. These eggs never hatch, they are never meant to. They are there only to provide sustenance for the child. The spiderlings consume the eggs, and when they are stronger, they consume their mother. It takes weeks. The mother, once she has given all the eggs she can - remains. There is a symbiosis between parent and child. The parent, having given all she can gives whatever she has left, in her own body. Her children take this body and use it to become. They gain their strength from her love, and sacrifice. It must be pleasant, in a way, to have a path of parental relationship laid out so firmly.”

“I suppose my path with my father has never been laid out firmly,” Will said. “You said a symbiosis. What does the mother get out of being eaten alive by her children?”

“A legacy, dear Will. The unchanging, unweathering adoration of her children. She will be with them forever.”

“Until they mature.”

“Hm?”

“Until they grow. And lay their own eggs, and are consumed by their own young.”

“Well, then. Let us be glad we are not crab spiders.”

# Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

end notes for trigger warnings

Chapter Notes

tw: for quite graphic descriptions of rape and violence.

It took some days of following Beau for him to find the perfect boy. Hannibal should not have cared, yet every moment Beau spent with Will was another tie to unbind, another nail to remove. As Hannibal followed Beau into a red-light district in the city, he thought almost affectionately of Beau.

It was rare to meet someone else whose obsession with Will was so difficult to hide. It was a bar, a sweaty seedy underground throbbing with too much bass where Beau found his boy.

A small, slight thing with piercing blue eyes and chocolate coloured curls framing an angular face. He couldn't have been more than twenty-five, but Hannibal supposed either Beau had to loosen his restrictions in order to find a boy close enough to Will, or he had fixated on a certain ideal of Will, caught forever at a certain age.

It was very unfortunate for the boy. He seemed such a nice young thing.

Hannibal followed them to a motel, where Beau paid for a small room for the night. Hannibal supposed he wanted time, he was apparently just out of prison. Yet the motel was a deplorable one, on the ground floor. Beau took the time to shut the curtains on the front windows, but not the back.

So, it was the back windows Hannibal went to, a good distance away in a copse of trees. It was so dark that he could not be seen by those inside, but the yellow glow of the room made it easy to track Beau and the boy. Understandably, he sent the boy to shower before touching him. Hannibal watched then, and laid his duffel bag carefully on the ground.

Beau was rough, and clearly unbearable to the boy who writhed and yelped, even behind Beau's rough hand clasped over his mouth. His screams weren't very loud, but Hannibal felt a creeping, slow disgust as he watched Beau pin him down on his back.

His wrists caught above his head in one big hand, the other laid firmly over the boy's mouth. Tears glittered on the boy's peachy cheeks, his creamy skin splattered with semen and sweat.

As a tableau it was troublesome, but quite beautiful still. The warm golden glow of the room reflected prettily on the boy's sweating skin, his collarbones in stark relief against a delicate chest, only faintly dusted with light hair.

Beau's body, holding the boy down in place, pinning him as he fucked him was much larger. Not just taller, but broader, more intimidating, simply huge in his desire and power. His chest was thickly furred with silver and brown hair, and when one of the boy's hands escaped his large grip, it twined in the hair and shoved hard, as if to push him off.

The boy sobbed now, as even his shove did little to disturb Beau. Almost in response, Beau flipped him abruptly onto his stomach, letting go of his mouth and holding onto each forearm, pulling his arms indelicately high above his head. The boy didn't seem to realise he was no longer gagged.

Hannibal couldn't hear him very well through the walls, but his swollen pink lips framed the same words repeatedly. Hannibal did not have to be an expert in lip-reading to recognise the words *"please stop"*.

When they had finished, Beau stood and pulled his jeans up his legs roughly. He went to the small bathroom, and shut the door behind him, perhaps to shower. The boy didn't run, perhaps in shock, perhaps he didn't see the point. Perhaps he was simply waiting to be paid. He curled up into a small, dirty ball and sobbed.

Shock, Hannibal decided when he didn't open his eyes, nor did his cries become more pronounced when Hannibal opened the door. The chain was weak, and it took only a moment for Hannibal to cut through it with the bolt cutters from his bag. He let himself in, and marvelled for a moment at the sobbing mess on the bed who had not even noticed his entrance. Hannibal shut the door behind him and stood at the wall to the right of the bathroom door.

He dropped his bag onto the floor, allowing it to smack onto the carpet. At this noise, the boy finally startled. His pretty pink mouth opened when he yelped.

"Daddy!"

Faintly, Hannibal wondered if this had cost extra. The bathroom door opened abruptly, and Beau strode out, still wet from his shower. It was a simple thing to step up behind him and slip a needle into his neck.

Hannibal held him while he passed out, keeping his face turned away from his so he could not recognise him. When he was unconscious, the boy, still on the bed, and scrabbling backwards, finally took to his feet as if to run.

Poor thing, had quite minimal survival instinct. Hannibal caught him neatly, his sweating hands slipping over Hannibal's plastic cover-suit. He bounced gently on the mattress when Hannibal pressed him down onto it, and strangled him.

His short nails scratched ineffectually at Hannibal's gloves.

Beau awakened in custody, his hands chained to a shiny metal table in front of him. No one was in the room with him, but there was an observation window in the wall opposite the table. He spoke clearly after a moment.

"I want my son. You call Will Graham."

# Chapter 5

Jack got the call when Will was in the scene. With a voice like thunder he ordered everyone else outside, away from the motel room where Will was reconstructing the scene. Dr Lecter moved to leave too, but Jack caught him, edged him aside subtly and spoke.

“He may want you here for this, Doctor.”

The scene was strange, and furious. The Ripper usually ran cold, an almost icy passion in his art, but this was a rawer, hotter kind of passion. The body had been moved, Beverly had put place of death on the double bed, which had been shoved to the side and tipped, balancing on its side. The flat pillows were stained with tears and they had fallen to the floor. The sheets had been re-purposed as bondage.

The body had been hoisted upwards, suspended from the wrists and left to kneel on another white sheet. It swayed slightly in the breeze. He had been strangled, blue-ish bruises shaped like fingers laid around his throat like a necklace. His organs had been removed posthumously, but Will could see why Jack had called him in.

His head tilted backwards, lilting to the side as if to receive a whisper. He would not have called this the work of The Ripper in any other case, but there was something, something in the hanging of the body, the framing of the tableau that confused him.

The boy’s ribcage had been neatly cracked open, as if clipped with scissors, his torso opened and laid bare; barren. His hands were blue with blood loss and they draped over the ropes of sheets, his toes curled against the carpet, barely touching the ground.

Zeller had found semen between the boy’s thighs. Ripper kills weren’t sexually motivated. But neither did killers usually stage such a tableau independently. Hannibal had observed that the posing resembled *The Kiss of Death*, a sculpture by Jaume Barba, excepting the hollowing out of the torso, and the elevated hands.

The boy’s internal body from collarbone to hipbone had been removed, as if scooped out. It left a cup of corpse, reddish muscle and yellow fat below layers of neatly sliced skin. The spine ran smoothly down the back, a faint sheen of muscle barely dulling the white sharp shine of it.

There was nothing left in the hole, and it had been Hannibal to first call it was it was; a vessel. That idea twined deep in Will’s brain and laid down to bed there. When Jack and Hannibal returned to the room, Will spoke.

“He’s a proxy. His -”

“Will,” Jack said.

Will stopped.

“It’s my dad, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” Hannibal and Jack said at the same time.

“He’s been arrested. Price ran a trace on the DNA of the semen, Will. It matched your father’s. He’s in custody,” Jack said.

“I’ll drive you,” Hannibal said.

“My dad didn’t do this,” Will said finally, in the car. Hannibal rubbed his thumbs over the leather of the steering wheel, a considering gesture.

“He… he hurts boys, he doesn’t kill them,” Will said.

“He didn’t strangle him?” Hannibal said. Will shook his head before Hannibal finished speaking.

“No. I know what my father does, and it’s not this.”

“What do you think is happening then?” Hannibal asked. The car was quiet for a moment, but for the growl of the engine and the dull roar of the road underneath them.

“That’s why his hands were lifted,” Will said finally. “He was posed as if he was reaching towards something.”

“His own death?”

“No,” Will said quietly. “His own becoming.”

*“"His young heart is thus extinguished. The blood in his veins grows cold. And all strength has gone. Faith has been extolled by his fall into the arms of death."”* Hannibal quoted.

“He didn’t know he was going to die. He didn’t ask for this,” Will disagreed.

“Perhaps we are concentrating too much on the boy then, and not enough on the killer,” Hannibal suggested.

“You think it’s the killer, reaching for something?”

“The boy was emptied out,” Hannibal coaxed.

“Are you suggesting the killer is lacking something? He’s seeking something, reaching for something he can’t have?”

Will mumbled something then, something too quiet for Hannibal to have been meant to hear. Hannibal reached over inside and laid his hand gently on Will’s knee.

“I know what you’re trying to say,” Will said. “But I’m telling you, my father didn’t do this.”

“I understand how hard this is, but they found his DNA on the corpse-” Hannibal said quietly.

“No! Maybe he raped him, but he didn’t kill him!”

“Alright, Will,” Hannibal said, gently. He touched Will briefly, laying his palm warm and firm against Will’s shoulder.

“I didn’t do that,” Beau said. The chains of his cuffs trailed across the metal of the interrogation table. The agent speaking to Beau folded his hands onto the table.

Jack, Beverly, Hannibal and Will stood behind the one-way, in a small, dark room. Will held his own elbows, as though he could hold himself together if he tried hard enough.

“Your DNA was found on the scene. Do you really expect us to believe you get out of prison, you found a hooker, and then he just happened to die in your motel room? Did he stage his own body like that too? Or did you? Did you think you could copy another killer’s methods and we’d just ignore the DNA, assume it was the Ripper?”

“I wanna talk to my kid,” Beau said, for perhaps the twentieth time that hour.

“You don’t have to go in,” Jack said, but the way he said it disagreed.

“I’ll go in,” Will said quietly. “He’ll talk to me.”

“Baby,” Beau said when Jack let Will into the interrogation room. The other agent bristled but when he looked at Jack’s haggard face he just folded up his notes and left, silent and angry.

“Hey, Daddy,” Will said quietly. Jack excused himself to the observation room. Will sat on the chair opposite his father, his hands and feet folded.

“I didn’t do that,” Beau said.

“Yeah,” Will agreed. Beau relaxed slightly, his chains rattling faintly. “But you slept with him, didn’t you?”

“Yeah,” Beau exhaled. It was more than he had admitted to the agent.

“But you hurt him. He was all torn and bruised up inside.”

“Maybe I was a little rough,” Beau allowed. “I just… I just got out of prison, boy.”

“You just got out of prison for doing this. You don’t wanna go back, right?” Will asked, quietly. Beau shook his head roughly, but he didn’t reply. Will was abruptly overcome with some wave of unidentifiable emotion, some terrible swell of feeling.

“Are you gonna go back to prison and leave me alone, again?” Will whispered, and it was this that broke Beau.

“No! I didn’t kill that boy, Will, I didn’t. I was rough with him, yeah, but I didn’t hurt him, I didn’t kill him. Christ, Will, don’t you believe me?” Beau demanded.

“I believe you,” Will said. “I don’t think you killed that kid. But why were you there at all? Who killed him?”

“I just….he just...he was so soft, Will, he looked so-”

“What, Dad? What did he look like? Was there someone else there?”

“No,” Beau said, his eyes shutting tight as he shook his head. “No, I don’t think so - I don’t know-”

“You don’t know? Do you think someone else was there, did someone else kill him?”

“I don’t know!” Beau yelled. His hands fisted, and he slammed them both into the table, the chains smashing into the metal with noise like a scream.

“Ok,” Will said softly. “Tell me about the boy, then. Where’d you meet him?”

“At the bar,” Beau said, sounding half near tears. “The Red Room, I think it was called. He was just… he came up to me, he kept- he was-”

“Was anyone with him at the bar? Anyone following him, maybe?”

“He’s leading him,” Hannibal said in the observation room. “This won’t be of any use if he’s brought to trial, it’s unethical.”

Jack didn’t reply for a long moment, and Beverly shifted from one foot to the other, wanting badly to go to Will.

“This is unethical, Jack,” Hannibal repeated. Jack shook his head slowly.

“There’s something in it,” he muttered. “The Ripper is here in this, somehow.”

Hannibal didn’t reply. Jack’s obsession with catching the Ripper had lead him to unethical actions before, it would again.

“No,” Beau said in the room, his voice cracking slightly. “Nobody followed him, I shouldn’t have took him back at all but-”

“But what?”

“But he looked so much like you,” Beau whispered. A susurration of shock echoed around the room and Will’s hands tightened on his elbows.

“He just needed someone to take care of him,” Beau said. “He was so small.”

“Dad-“

“No,” Beau said. His words had a heavy weight to them, heaved up from decades of repression and silence, they broke as soon as he spilled them, but he would, he would pour them onto the table between himself and his son and he would tell him everything he should have known.

“No, don’t misunderstand,” Beau said.

“You must stop this, Jack,” Hannibal urged. “This will be traumatic enough for Will, this should not be witnessed.”

Jack rubbed his small beard roughly. “Why was there a tableau? If Beau Graham didn’t kill that kid, who did? Who else do we know who displays their victims like this, Doctor?”

“I just wanted to keep you with me, baby, you’ve been gone since you were a teen, I just wanted you around more, is that so terrible? You’re my son, you’re mine. I made you,” Beau said. “I would never hurt you.”

“This is hurting me!” Beau shoved the table roughly this time, catching Will across the chest with it.

“I would never hurt you!” He shouted.

“How long…” Will said, and found he couldn’t finish the question. He didn’t know what the end of it was.

“How long have you been hurting boys because they look like me?” Will said finally.

“I don’t hurt boys,” Beau said.

“Daddy.”

There was a long silence while Beau rubbed the red rings around his wrists from the cuffs.

“How old was I?” Will whispered.

“How old were you, when? When I first-” Beau stopped himself abruptly.

“When you first what?”

“With the first boy,” Beau said.

“That’s not what you were gonna say,” Will disagreed. Bile rose in his throat slowly, inexorably. Beau rubbed his wrists.

“You used to sleepwalk,” Beau said finally after a long silence. “Used to go a-wanderin’ everywhere in the night. You remember? I used to have to lock you in your room some nights or I’d wake up and you’d be outside with the dogs standing under the moon.”

“I remember,” Will whispered.

“Doctor gave you pills for it. When you got too tired, you were supposed to take one and it’d keep you knocked out.”

“What are you saying?” Will said softly.

“I never hurt you, not like that,” Beau said defensively. Fat tears glassed his eyes and threatened to drip. “But you looked so much like your goddamn mother.”

“Is that-”

“You were fifteen,” Beau whispered. A tear finally overflowed, dripping down his stubbly cheek. “I just-I just held you. You went everywhere in your sleep, Will, you needed rest. I just thought if I helped you sleep, you’d be ok.”

A slowly rising wave surfaced in Will’s mind, a faint memory of waking. When he sat up in bed, he was smaller than he ever remembered being, with a thick furry taste in his mouth. He remembered looking around and thinking he had sleepwalked again, because he wasn’t in his own bed, he had been in his father’s.

“I crushed the pills up into a cup of milk,” Beau said. “You fell asleep so fast. I just - I didn’t hurt you, Will, I wouldn’t. I just took you to bed, I just let you sleep. You fell asleep on my chest, like you did when you was a little boy, and I just held you and petted you and you slept the whole night through, you slept so well.”

“Stop this,” Hannibal said. “This is not the path to your Ripper, and it has passed unethicality.”

Suddenly there was a noise at the door and Price peeked his head into the observation room.

“The drug test results are back,” he said.

Will shut the door behind him, while another agent unlocked his father. Hannibal, and Jack met him in the hall and Hannibal reached out to him, clasping his upper arm gently.

“Are you alright?” He asked softly. Will trembled under his hand with fine shivers.

“Zeller said he was drugged,” Jack interrupted. “He couldn’t have killed the kid, or hung him up like that because he had enough ketamine in his system to knock him out.”

“Yeah, but he still raped him,” Will said.

“We can’t prove that,” Jack muttered.

“What?”

“He says it was consensual. It was rough, but eyewitnesses say the kid left the bar with him willingly.”

“I-” Will muttered quietly, wavering slightly. Hannibal let go of his arm abruptly and grabbed a wastepaper can from the hall. He got it in front of Will just as he started vomiting. Hot,

acidic bile burned his throat as he threw up into the can. Jack left them both in the hall, Will purging while Hannibal held the can, his other hand between Will's shoulder-blades.

# Chapter 6

“So, you’re telling me some killer broke into a motel room, drugged your father, murdered a prostitute, and then staged the murder to make it look like a Ripper kill?” Jack asked skeptically. Will shrugged in response, and scrubbed a hand through his hair.

“It’s the only thing that makes sense. My father didn’t kill the kid, but someone did. Maybe a pimp, or a drug dealer. The circles Thomas King ran in was full of guys like that,” Will said.

“Is this really all you can offer me-”

“I’m not a fucking psychic! I go in, I read the scene, I can’t do any more than that, Jack, I’m telling you what I got from the scene - the scene I shouldn’t have even been in in the first place!” Will snapped.

“Are you sure you’re ok to be at work?” Jack said, levelly. “If you really need to take some time off-”

“I don’t need to take any goddamn time off, I need everyone to get off my fucking back,” Will hissed, ready for an argument.

“How do we know it’s not the Ripper?” Jack said instead. Will deflated.

“I don’t know, just the- the feel of it is all wrong. It’s … I don’t know,” Will said eventually, ashamed and irritated he couldn’t give a better answer.

Abruptly, the door opened hard, and Will blinked at it, wondering who had the balls to just let themselves into Jack’s office. It was Beverly, looking frazzled and worn.

“Jack,” said Beverly. “The body’s gone.”

“What?”

“The kid,” Beverly said, with a sidelong look at Will. “Thomas King. His body is gone.”

“You’re telling me someone just walked out of here with a goddamn corpse?” Jack bellowed. Beverly, to her credit, didn’t flinch. She started to speak, but was interrupted by a phone ringing. Jack answered with a cold fury that made Will flinch. He could hear the tinny echo of Price’s voice through the earpiece.

*“Jack, we found it. You better get down here.”*

They arrived at Will’s classroom together, Will, Jack and Beverly, just as the team had began to work. The body had been hung again, in an almost identical position, except instead of the bed tipped on its side near the tableau, Will’s desk had been shoved to the right and laid prone.

The boy was posed where Will's desk normally stood, and in the back of his mind Will wondered how he would ever stand there again without seeing the white clay-like sculpture of his reflection.

The framing was just the same, hands raised above his head, kneeling in supplication, his head tilted intimately. White sheets had been draped over him delicately, for him to kneel on, and to preserve his modesty.

The scene was almost identical to the first one, except the sense of it. The indefinable aura of a Ripper stage, the cold beautiful passion that had been missing from the first scene. It was here now.

The hollowed out torso of the corpse had been covered with plastic, to minimise contamination in the lab, but now the plastic was gone. In its place, clouds of soft pink flowers with thick green stems and leaves were stuffed into the cavity. With Beverly at his back, Will shut his eyes. Jack interrupted him.

"You get anything?"

"It's him," Will exhaled. "It's the Ripper."

"Anything else?" Jack demanded. Will could understand his bone-deep frustration, but not enough to stop him from snapping back.

"I don't know!"

"Hey, guys?" Zeller said, turned towards them. He placed an evidence bag in a labeled box and stood.

"Bad news about the flowers. They're common, like, surprisingly so. You can grow them pretty easy."

"What the hell does this mean?" Jack said.

"*Dianthus barbatus,* a durable, yet delicate plant, known for its eyes," Price said.

"It has eyes?" Zeller interrupted.

"They look like they have eyes," Price corrected. "They can be many colours. The flower's also edible, and it's got a particular meaning."

"What meaning?" Will croaked.

"In the language of flowers, they're known to represent masculinity, affection, and joining a new world. They're most associated with the phrase; *"grant me a single smile"."*

"That's it?" said Jack. "The Ripper wants us to smile?"

"I should mention," Price said hesitantly. "*Dianthus barbatus* has a more common name."

They waited for a moment while Price fiddled with an evidence bag in his hands.

“They’re better known as *sweet William*.”

# Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

> trigger warnings for: threats of sexual violence, mentions of rape, some violence, knife mentions and incest mentions

Will doesn't want to go home, but that isn't much of an option. So instead, he does the next best thing and he books his father a motel room with a grimace, and tells him that he needs to leave for a few days because Will needs to figure some stuff out.

Beau looks like a kicked dog when he leaves, and Will is shaken because this is the first time he has ever told his father he's not welcome. It is the first time he has ever given his father an order.

But he can't bring himself to care, and it's too much, the idea that he will have to go home, and sit next to Beau and meet the eyes of a man who drugged him just to hold him, and who fucks boys who look like him. Will sends him away, and in the gathering closeness of the damp night he watches his father drive away.

It's much later and colder when Will slips his fingers into himself. The shadows seem to drench the room like some rich dark wine. He has locked the dogs out of his bedroom, urged them into the living room so he can be alone.

He will do this, because he has never done this before, but more than that, nobody has ever done this before to him, and Will would like to feel a part of himself that has been touched by absolutely no one.

His fingers are warm and slick when he traces over his hole softly and he suppresses a noise that is building in his throat. Nobody has ever touched him like this. This is his body, and he will be the first.

The tip of his middle finger presses inward with an inexorable slowness and Will's mind goes blank. The blankness doesn't help when he eases his finger inside, instead the blankness draws forth images of trauma, of his father, of murder victims, and rape victims, and Thomas King's poor bruised face on the floor of his classroom.

So he casts about roughly, he refuses, he absolutely refuses to allow Beau into his mind while he touches himself like this, and instead his mind bounces along the people he knows. He thinks of Alana first, but she is too gentle, she is too soft and kind, and somewhere in the primal, most animalistic part of Will's brain he thinks she can't protect him.

He would never tell anyone, but he thinks of Beverly next, because Beverly is tough and attractive. He slips a second finger into himself thinking of her hands, strong and correct as she manhandled him into a better position for shooting.

But as if the very thought of the word ‘manhandle’ has awoken some primitive part of his brain, he is suddenly inundated with thoughts of the men he knows.

He knows precisely who he wants to think of, but he can’t, he won’t let himself. At least until he’s mindless enough to forget about it in the morning. In his mind, Beverly keeps making fun of him anyway. He thinks of Jack only long enough to think *jesus no*, and of Price and Zeller only long enough to sigh in disappointment.

He really doesn’t know that many people, and none of the ones he does know are pinging the animal, primal part of his mind that doesn’t seem to give a fuck about Will’s pride, and calls out only for someone warm and strong and masculine, fierce enough to protect.

But Will is getting more and more desperate, because his fingers inside himself alone isn’t creating the self-claiming atmosphere he had so desired.

He’s gone soft, and so he allows himself- finally and with a faint pang of disappointment in himself- to think of Hannibal. As if the thought is enough, suddenly his fingers feel more alive, warmer and better inside him.

He allows his upper body to fall forward, until he can press his forehead into the sheets while he works his hand between his legs. Hannibal is warm, and strong behind him, but not simply muscular, he is thick and solid, and big enough to cover Will’s whole body if Will lay down just like this.

Hannibal could lay himself over Will, his stronger body protective and firm behind him.

Will’s fingers work faster on their own, and though it hasn’t felt amazing yet, it’s good enough to get him hard. Not just the physical stimulation, which has yet to rise above ‘nice’, but the idea itself is wonderful.

The needy, animal part of him is soothed by the thought of Hannibal, pressing him into the sheets and covering his body with his. Hannibal would be strong, and undeniably masculine as he pushed Will into the mattress.

He lets his fingers fuck faster, because this is exactly what he wanted, he wanted to fuck himself with his mind free and independent of his father’s influence. There is something psychologically pleasing in the penetration, something that feels claiming, and *fun*, and exciting, more than any physical stimulation.

Will wonders freely now, he shouldn’t be thinking of his friend like this, he knows, but how would anyone know? His thoughts are his own, and if his thoughts want to center on Hannibal fucking Will on his fingers, well, nobody needs to know except Will.

He isn’t sure what to do, but it seems his body knows better than him, because he wonders suddenly if Hannibal would hold his hips, and fuck him, if Hannibal would ever be so base as

to pin Will down and *take*, or if Hannibal would cover his exposed back with his strong chest and roll his hips slow and firm.

Will clenches on his fingers at the thought, because he isn't sure which he would prefer, and as he tightens there is suddenly a needy sensitivity inside that he's grazing with his fingers.

Will isn't sure if it would hurt if he pressed a third finger in, but there's only one way to find out, so he props himself up slightly and lets it sink in, slow and easy.

Lubricant is dripping down his wrist but he can't find it in him to care, not when his whole body seems absolutely and wholly focused on where he clenches around his own fingers. There is only a bare friction where his fingers slide in, because he is so wet inside. He remembers he can move his fingers, not just fuck with them, so he curls them forward, inside and towards his cock and suddenly he is groaning into his mattress, his noises muffled and shaken as his ass cants up in the air.

He crooks his fingers and *strokes*, and makes an absolutely stupid noise. His fingers move easily in the slick, and he's so warm inside, he thinks maybe Hannibal would like this, perhaps he would enjoy fucking Will on his fingers and making his cock drool onto his bedsheets.

He is trembling slightly, and his other hand is clenched tight in his bedsheets. He realises that his hips are moving, and he's working himself down onto his own fingers with an obscene grinding motion. His imagination helpfully provides the image, and the sound and sensation of how it might feel to let Hannibal take him like this, to grind back onto his cock and use Hannibal, and let Hannibal use him.

He's speaking, he knows, he can hear himself mumble into the sheets, but he can't care, his whole mind is taken up with how it feels to be so wonderfully full and slick and how intense it is when he crooks his fingers forward and rubs that needy spot slowly.

He can hear snatches of what he's saying, and he hears Hannibal's name, and once an absolutely ridiculous *'oh my god'* moan that is porn star quality and wholly mortifying. Will is, not for the first time, very glad he doesn't have neighbours.

His phone is ringing, he realises a beat too slow, loud and harsh, but it's in the living room and Will is too close to stop now. The idea of ending this to go and answer a phone call seems like blasphemy when he's right there, on the edge of what promises to be an earth-shattering orgasm so he ignores it.

His hips work faster and he's filled with the wonderful knowledge that he's the first person to ever do this to himself, and nobody even needs to know that Will is face-down on his bed with his fingers buried inside himself moaning Hannibal's name as slick drips down his wrist.

When he orgasms, it's the slowest, most golden kind he's ever had, it starts in his toes and burns upward, and he can feel his cock dripping onto his bed but it's secondary to the sensation of getting *fucked*.

His heart is beating so fast, and come drips out of his cock, as slow and lazy as morning dew and for a minute he can't stop working his fingers into himself, and he peaks with the most wonderful, golden wave of satisfaction that melts his bones down to nothing.

He thinks he says Hannibal's name as he comes, but nobody needs to ever know that. Will lays face-down on his bed and trembles. His phone is still ringing.

Of course, because this is how Will's life goes, he is politely attacked as he tries to get a damn glass of water. The glass is almost full as he curves his sinfully relaxed body over the high counter, and abruptly there's a noise and sudden heat all along his back and thighs as someone steps up behind him.

He has just a moment to register scruffy jeans prickling the sensitive hairs along the backs of his bare thighs before there's a cold sharpness at his throat.

The metal scrapes the vulnerable skin under his adam's apple and he briefly considered the glass in his hand as a weapon. But before he can lift it, a polite, faintly British voice rises. "No, no, no, dear boy, put that down," he says and actually *tuts* at Will, as though he is a misbehaving child.

Slowly, he places the glass on the counter, the condensation damp on his fingers. He allows a quick, sidelong glance at Angel, who is sleeping on her back not three feet away from an intruder. He loves his pack, but they are none of them good guard dogs.

"Good boy. Bend over," says the man behind him and there is a single moment of absolute, hellish, blinding rage that surges up in Will and he makes a grab for the glass again to do anything, to smash it into this man's face, to take the shards and carve. But the man grabs his wrist, smooth and swift and slams it onto the countertop. Hot red pain surges up the length of his arm and he gasps.

"Be still, boy, I'm not going to *rape* you. Bend forward, reach the keys. We shall need to borrow your car, I'm afraid. Mine is in the shop," the man quips. Will's fury does not abate at this - this silvery threat of sexual violence painted over as Will's wrongful assumption is wholly deliberate, he knows.

He presses forward, teeth gritting together hard enough to create a fine powder in his mouth as he snatches his keys from the bowl he keeps them in on the windowsill. He is coaxed to turn, slowly, and when he puts the keys into an outstretched hand it is Abel Gideon that takes them.

"It would appear we have some confusion to deal with," Gideon tells him in the car. He drives with one hand, the other holds the knife in the same hand that rests on Will's knee. Will sneers at him because there are many things he can be called, but sane has never been one of them.

Gideon's hand tightens roughly, the blade scraping over the thin hairs on Will's knee. But then, he releases slightly, relaxing his grip. His hand is large and square and quite warm on

Will's upper knee, the handle of the knife digs in slightly to his flesh.

"For quite some time, I have not been sure of who I am," Gideon tells him.

"You think I know?" Will shoots back. Gideon gives him a sidelong look, one that is as searching as it is lascivious and Will shrinks back into his seat.

"I heard that my last crime was practically a love letter," Gideon continues as though Will hasn't interrupted.

"Hardly," Will says. He shifts uncomfortably in his seat. "Weren't you in jail, when that happened? Surely, that tells you you're not the Ripper."

"Hardly," Gideon says softly, and Will isn't sure what he's responding to. "But then, time itself is so...non-linear. Wouldn't you agree?"

Will would like to respond in the negative, would like to roll his eyes even, but for a brief moment he is drowning in Hobbs, and his father, and his stream. For a moment, he is both fifteen and waking in father's bed confused, and twenty-six and being stabbed in the shoulder, and thirty-one and shooting Garret Jacob Hobbs dead in front of his daughter. It takes minutes for him to resurface, sweating and gasping.

"You didn't kill Thomas King," Will says instead. "You didn't put his corpse in my classroom."

"Is it true the body was filled with Sweet William flowers? And it was placed precisely where you stand, when you teach?" Gideon asks, curiously. Will doesn't respond.

"I have been the Ripper, I have been nothing, I have never been the Ripper," Gideon says softly, as though he's musing, or as though he's repeating a mantra.

"You're not the Ripper," Will says.

"Then who am I? Then why do I feel - why do I feel like that is precisely who I am?" Gideon asks.

Will can't answer this, so he says yes, instead. Yes, King's body was filled with Sweet Williams, yes it was placed in his classroom. The car judders when he speaks, as though Gideon allows it to drift over the bumps of cats' eyes' in the road.

Gideon wants Will to ask where they're going, so Will won't. It is perhaps not extraordinarily intelligent to deliberately piss off a man who is in the grips of an identity crisis, but Will is stubborn, and he will allow himself this small jab at his captor.

However, when the car turns onto a road into the suburbs, Will recognises it and chews his lip. It's dark, and cold, and Will is half-naked and faintly trembling. He has only a moment to pray to God that the small soft trickle down his inner thigh is sweat and not lube.

Then Hannibal opens his front door to the sight of Gideon holds Will with one arm around his waist like a lover, and the other pressing the knife to his throat. There is only a moment of

strange, absolute blankness on Hannibal's face before he steps back, politely, making room for them to enter.

"Please, come in," he says and Gideon presses Will forward, leading himself into the brightness of the only open door in the hall, directly in the heart of the house. Hannibal closes and locks the door behind them and follows them both into his kitchen. Hannibal is wearing loose pinstripe pajama pants and a comfortable red sweater that looks softer than anything Will's ever touched before in his life.

"Can I offer you anything?" Hannibal says, and it's the dry, almost sarcastic edge of his voice that calms Will's heart. Hannibal is not particularly worried, and so Will has less reason to be.

"We're fine, thank you," Gideon speaks for both of them. He winds his arm tighter around Will's waist, and his hand rests on the jut of Will's hipbone, a show of possessiveness that Hannibal cannot miss. Will swallows, once, twice. "I think you know why I'm here."

"I have an idea," Hannibal says, his eyes drifting the once to Gideon's hand on Will's hip. "Can I ask that you let go of Will, and we sit and speak like adults?"

"Oh, no, I'm afraid not," Gideon says. "Will is my...leverage. And frankly, a delight."

Will's stomach twists at this and he scowls at his feet. Gideon's hips roll then, a soft slow thrust disguised as a languid movement as he steps backward. Will doesn't realise what he's about to do until he does it, and he's as surprised as anyone else when he turns his head sharply and spits in Gideon's face.

"How...rude," Gideon says softly, as though he's trying something on for size. He doesn't wipe the clear spittle from his cheek, but abruptly Will is paralysed with fear. He has spat in the face of a man holding a blade to his throat. "Although…" Gideon muses.

"I have been locked up for some time. Quite some time." he says. "Grant me a kiss, and I'll forgive you."

Will jams his elbow backwards, but rather than smashing into bone like he hopes, Gideon's hand catches his arm. He presses a thumb into a nerve cluster in Will's inner elbow and urges his arm downwards. Will wants to gasp from the sharp pain but he won't give Gideon the satisfaction.

"Have you seen my latest piece?" He asks Hannibal then and Hannibal drifts left slightly, mirroring Gideon's relaxed lean against the countertop.

"I didn't realise you were claiming it as yours," Hannibal says. "I have seen pictures."

"It's beautiful, isn't it?"

Hannibal raises an eyebrow slowly, as though Gideon is gauche to call what he considers his own work beautiful, and Will almost allows the corner of his lip to quirk up.

"Do you know what it means?" Gideon asks quietly.

“I’m afraid so,” Hannibal says and Will jerks his head up. Hannibal is lying, or has lied. When Will was read as too involved -as if there is any way Will could be less involved in the Ripper- Jack had called for Hannibal’s opinion. Hannibal had told Jack he didn’t know what it meant, at the time.

“Go on,” Gideon says. He gestures neatly with the hand not holding the knife and when he’s done he rests his hand close to where it had been, resting almost obscenely low on Will’s stomach.

“I believe it’s a confession, of a kind,” Hannibal says.

“A love letter,” Gideon breathes, as though Hannibal is confirming his suspicions.

“I would more likely call it a confession of… interest.”

“A love letter, to Will,” Gideon presses, and Will’s heart quickens.

“You think the Ripper is confessing his love for Will?” Hannibal asks, and Will trembles faintly. His boxers shorts are too short, he thinks, and for a brief ridiculous moment he feels embarrassed to be standing in Hannibal’s kitchen with far too much thigh on show.

“Don’t you? The Ripper is...obsessed,” Gideon says.

“Are you?” Hannibal asks quickly, a swift jab to Gideon’s sense of self.

“Of course,” Gideon responds, but it’s just a second too late and Will realises. Gideon still doesn’t know who he is.

“I apologise,” Hannibal says and Will is as confused as Gideon. “I didn’t realise the… depth of your feelings.”

“What?"

“I certainly wouldn’t mean to *betray* a colleague,” Hannibal says and Will gets it. Gideon however, doesn’t, and he falls for Hannibal’s trap.

“Are you telling me you and Will-”

“Of course,” Hannibal says, a slow mimicry of Gideon’s exact tone and inflection earlier. “I would not open the door at-” He checks his watch. “Three am, for a friend.”
Will would like to say that that makes Hannibal kind of a shitty friend, but Hannibal is in the process of potentially saving his life, so for once, he keeps his damn mouth shut.

“Isn’t that why you brought him here?” Hannibal says. “You knew.”

“I knew,” Gideon repeats. “I knew?”

“That is why you came here, isn’t it?” Hannibal pushes.

“You think I came here to mock you, to show you- No, that’s not why I’m here,” Gideon says.

“The Ripper is infatuated with Will,” Hannibal presses. “Doesn’t it stand to reason that The Ripper would want to warn off potential other… interests?”

“Are you a potential interest?” Gideon says, distracted by Hannibal’s twists and turns. Hannibal leans back, folding his arms across his chest. The sweater is slightly loose, and it falls forward slightly as he moves. It exposes his collarbone briefly, a hint of silvery chest hair in the v of the cashmere. Will realises Hannibal’s feet are bare and for a moment a brief feeling of fear swells up when he sees Hannibal pale feet, bare against cool tile and somehow looking strangely vulnerable.

“I suppose you would have to ask Will,” Hannibal says and Will is lost for a second until he regains the string of the conversation.

“Obviously,” he says before his brain can catch up with his mouth, but it seems to be the right answer based on the satisfied, deep exhale Hannibal lets out.

“I see,” Gideon says guardedly. “Is there-”

Neither Will not Hannibal will know the end of that sentence however, because there is is a moment within that response where Gideon is distracted and Will can take his leave.

The knife is no longer pressed against the line of his throat, it is lifted briefly, perhaps an inch or two of clearance as Gideon gestures. It’s enough for Will to drop to his knees, hard enough to bruise. He has barely cleared the blade before Hannibal sweeps forward and punches Gideon.

For a second it is alarmingly brutal, and there is a savage crushing sound as Hannibal’s knuckles meet Gideon’s cheekbone.

Will’s stomach turns over and he shoves himself upwards to stand as Gideon crashes to the floor beside him.

He is still conscious, and so Will kicks him in the face, a strange automatic instinct that drives his bare foot heel-first into Gideon’s head.
He appears to be unconscious, but Hannibal doesn’t hesitate.

He finds a roll of partially-used duct tape from a messy drawer, and binds Gideon’s wrists while he tells Will to go call Jack. The heel of his foot leaves tiny smacks of Gideon’s blood, shaped like Will’s footprint as he goes.

Will runs to the phone, and he’s not sure why, but mostly he just knows he wants to vacate because it has struck him as singularly hilarious that Hannibal not only owns duct tape, but he has a *junk drawer*.

Will doesn’t want to laugh in front of Hannibal, and Gideon’s unconscious body, so instead he calls Jack.

Luckily, the shakiness in his voice can be attributed to trauma from his kidnapping, and not the fact that silent tears are streaming down his face as he swallows gale after gale of hysterical laughter. Hannibal has a *junk drawer.*

Will thinks he might be in shock.

Jack hangs up before Will can say anything much better than:

“Gideon is here, Hannibal’s house, he’s unconscious-”

It doesn’t take long before SUVs are pulling up outside Hannibal’s manor home, crude large vehicles looking conspicuous in Hannibal’s neighbourhood. Will feels the ridiculous need to apologise for this.

Jack strides into Hannibal’s house and takes them in with a slow, furious gaze. Will’s hands shake slightly around the cup of Irish coffee Hannibal had pressed into his grip.

He wonders for a moment if Jack is getting the wrong idea from this scene, of Will and Hannibal sharing coffee while an unconscious person moans faintly from the other side of the room. Hannibal’s handsome sweater and pajama pants are incongruous with the body stirring the other side of the kitchen island.

Will wears nothing but his stupid, too-short boxers and a grey henley that he had rolled up at the sleeves in order to touch himself without staining the cuffs with lube. It seems a thousand years ago since Will has laid himself out on his own bed.

Abruptly he wonders how long Gideon was there, if he saw, if he’ll tell anyone if he had seen. Then he puts his cup of coffee down hard enough to rattle the glass. Suddenly he understands why Gideon wanted to see Hannibal. Gideon thought he was the Ripper, and he thought the Ripper was infatuated with Will, and Will had laid himself out on his bed in front of him and moaned another person’s name. Will scratches his fingertips into Hannibal’s table as he realises Gideon might have killed Hannibal. His hands are trembling too much to lift his cup of coffee.

Hannibal is talking to Jack, and Will can’t think of a not-crazy way to say *“do you think the murderer saw me fuck myself on my fingers before he kidnapped me and brought me to my therapist’s house?”* so he stays silent.

Perhaps a wise choice, as Beverly joins him at the coffee table a moment later. He picks his cup up again, but rests it against the table to disguise the tremble in his hands.

“Nice catch,” she offers.

Will shrugs slightly, his coffee almost slopping over the edge of his cup.

“Barely a catch,” Will says. “Hannibal’s the one who punched him and tied him up.”

“Not what I meant,” Beverly says and it takes Will a minute to get what she’s saying as she gives an open, grinning look from Will sitting in his shorts, with wild bedhead, to Hannibal in his pajamas, and bare feet.

Will would like to dispel her illusions, but since he sat down he's been paranoid about the faint feeling of lubricant drying between his ass and Hannibal's stupid fancy chair. So instead he just sighs.

"You think you could give me a lift home?"

Hannibal appears as if Will has called him.

"Nonsense, it's far too late. Besides, you'll have to come back in in the morning to file a report. There's no sense in driving all the way back to Wolf Trap, and then here again in just a few hours. Stay here," Hannibal says.

But there's a look in his eyes, that Will recognises both from being a beat cop, and by simple virtue of being Hannibal's friend and it says *stick around, let's get our story straight.*

Will notices Hannibal has not offered his guest room, and it seems deliberate, like Hannibal is leaving an opening for assumptions. It's reasonable for sure but the way Beverly is looking between him and Hannibal with an open smirk is disconcerting. Then, like an angel, she kicks Will in the shin hard, and says:

"I can feed your dogs, if you want."

When the agents have left with a cuffed Gideon, and Will has bodily removed Beverly from Hannibal's property, Hannibal calls him into the kitchen. He has dumped the coffee cups, and is pouring two glasses of wine.

"I hope you don't mind," Hannibal says, gesturing with the bottle. "I suppose I wanted a drink."

"I'm so sorry," Will says automatically. He feels as though he has driven Hannibal to drink, all just because he couldn't shut his fucking mouth while jerking it. He is still shaking as guilt and anger and hysterical humour at the ridiculous nature of his life swirl around him.

But Hannibal just looks at him, and says what Will was praying he wouldn't.

"Why did Abel Gideon come here tonight?" Hannibal says.

"I don't know."

"Will," Hannibal says, and it's that, the gentleness of his voice combined with how he stands just looking at him that breaks Will. Hannibal has always been patient with him, even at Will's worst he had understood him. This will be embarrassing, it will be humiliating, but Hannibal will understand.

"He thinks he's the Ripper," Will says. "And he thinks the Ripper is in love with me."

"Yes," Hannibal agrees. He rounds the kitchen island, where less than an hour ago lay a man, bleeding and trussed up. "I assumed that's why he kidnapped you. It doesn't seem to explain

why he brought you here."

Will takes the glass Hannibal is offering him and he swallows two good mouthfuls of it before remembering to slow down and sip. He wants to pace, but he doesn't want Hannibal to be frightened of him, or to think him presumptuous.

"The Ripper is a control freak," Will says. "He wants absolute control, he- he wants to own, he is jealous to the nth degree. Gideon is confused, and he thinks he's the Ripper, he is adopting traits he can recognise and he has adopted what he sees as the Ripper's...infatuation."

Hannibal doesn't respond, but he takes a long, slow pull of his wine. His hair is tousled just slightly. Some terrible sea of arousal and guilt surges in Will's belly and he swallows compulsively.

"So, he's acting how he thinks the Ripper would," Will says, and Hannibal is just not getting it, he has no idea. Or he does, and he's making Will work for it, making it so that Will is going to have to say the words. Will doesn't know which is worse.

"He thinks the Ripper would want to kill you," Will presses, and Hannibal simply raises an eyebrow minutely, a micro-expression that brings nothing but pain and humiliation to Will.

"Because I'm attracted to you," Will says and it's like his body is on fire, every tiny hair stands up and seems to burn with shame. "He thinks the Ripper would be jealous of that, so he acted as the Ripper would."

"Are you saying he was here to kill me?" Hannibal finally breaks what felt like an aeon of silence and Will grasps at this lifeline.

"I think so. I'm so sorry," he says.

"This is hardly your fault," Hannibal replies, and he puts his wine glass down. "Why would you feel sorry?"

"Because it's my fault he came here-"

"Did you let Abel Gideon out of his cell at the BSHCI?" Hannibal interrupts.

"No-"

"Did you urge him to hold a knife to your throat?"

"No-"

"Did you force him to drive you to my home, did you tease him by telling him you're attracted to me, have you encouraged his delusion in any way?" Hannibal presses, and Will thinks quietly that at least one of those is true, but he has suffered quite enough humiliation for one night, and he will die before admitting to Hannibal what he thinks really happened, the details of why Gideon brought them to Hannibal, so he just shakes his head.

“No, but-”

“Then how,” Hannibal says, and really, Will would be pissed off at being interrupted so much if Hannibal weren’t making a point. “How could you apologise to me, as if any of this is your doing?”

“I just…” Will breathes for a moment. His wine is dark in the glass and in the unforgiving lights of Hannibal’s kitchen, it looks like blood. “I feel like I’ve stained you. Corrupted you.”

“Dear Will,” Hannibal says, and he comes around the table separating them. “You could never,” he says and he brings Will into his arms and just holds him.

# Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

the first sex scene they have, as requested.
TW: insect imagery

The weight of Hannibal's hands is cool, relaxing, as he draws them down the width of Will's arms. He is still holding Will close to his chest, and he rocks slightly, comfortingly.

His left hand tightens briefly, and slips upward, and presses on the back of Will's head as though he is drawing him further into his embrace. Will is slightly smaller, shorter and thinner and it feels as though Hannibal's strong body is encasing him, protecting him from all sides.

He doesn't know how long they stand there, holding each other. His wrists feel warm from where they're pressed against Hannibal's back, as though his body heat is is killing the chill in Will's blood. The soft slip of the red sweater is pleasant against his hypersensitive skin. Hannibal smells clean, and warm, unperfumed.

There's the faint acidic scent of red wine, and being this close to Hannibal when he is not wrapped in his suited layers feels like discovering a wonderful secret. He is comfortable, barefoot, natural and unscented. His hair is free and loose, and there is a lock that keeps falling onto his forehead.

He would like if Hannibal pulled him back into an embrace, but he seems content to hold his arms, and watch him.

Will has always felt absurdly disconnected from his body. It feels like some strange thing he must drag around with him, something that weighs him down, leaves him tethered where his natural state is floating. Perhaps that's why he finds it so hard to stay in one place for so long, he's moved more times than anyone he knows, and every time he chooses somewhere new to live, a studio apartment in a city, a log cabin in the mountains, a trailer by the bayou.

He's always rented before, until Wolf Trap. Maybe he's ready to commit. Hannibal's hands are strong, square shapes that taper to neat, long fingers. He has always leaned toward physical acts to ground him; he chooses to work with his hands because if he is to be stuck so firmly on the ground, he must find a way to enjoy sensation.

"Did I wake you?" Will asks, and Hannibal's head tilts so very minutely to the left as though he's assessing Will, or simply taking a moment to remember him, to carve a statue of him in this moment in his memory palace. He understands Will meticulously, but not naturally. As though they are made from the same soil, but not made the same.

He works to understand Will, and he is unique in that that. Will can see Hannibal realise that he would prefer not to be floating free in this moment. Gideon is best forgotten for now, but there is still the adrenaline and cortisol to deal with.

“I was not sleeping, but playing the theremin in my bedroom,” Hannibal says, joining Will easily, kindly, in a more pleasant pretense of how Will arrived. “Were you sleeping before you came?”

Will stalls for a moment, the corner of his mouth wants to twitch upward, and his fingers flutter like a secret signal, like his body wants to tell Hannibal what he was doing, and how he feels; still slick inside and lax from orgasm, his stomach and thighs tight from stress. He opens his mouth and can’t find words for a moment, but he sees Hannibal’s eyes flit down to his mouth and back to his eyes. Then, down again. His gaze is heavy enough to feel like a caress.

“I was going to sleep, after,” Will says, and he watches for Hannibal’s tiny reaction. There is a minuscule lifting of the heavily-lidded eyes, and he can see pleasure, the confirmed suspicion in the warmth of Hannibal’s regard. Will’s wrist still aches, and Hannibal watches him, so close to his face that his damp breath stirs the strands of curls atop Will’s head.

“It is very late,” Hannibal says neutrally, but Will is adept at reading him. There is a jolt of pleasure that surprises him when he sees the wish hidden in Hannibal’s face. “Should I prefer the spare room for you? Or would you like another drink?”

“More wine,” Will decides.

“And then?” Hannibal says

“And then I’d like to see you play your theremin,” Will says, and is comforted for his boldness by the nakedly pleased expression Hannibal wears. Hannibal’s thumb comes up to rest on Will's lower lip, as though he is gently removing the trace of wine. But he rests the pad of his thumb there for a moment, the soft strength of his hand balanced delicately on the plush swell of his lip.

Will blinks slowly, and Hannibal watches the minute smile that curves his mouth as though it is fascinating. Will knows how this will go, and he has plenty of time to fashion an excuse. Hannibal is nothing if not a gentleman, and Will can feel the warmth of the flush on his own cheeks. Hannibal is so old-fashioned, classic in most regards.

He invites Will to bed, and Will accepts.

“If I saw you every day, forever, Will, I would remember this time,” Hannibal says to him in bed, and Will is too drowsy and careless to be embarrassed. He grins at Hannibal, a rare show of teeth instead and Hannibal slips his right hand under his thigh and lifts it.

They had brought their wine upstairs, and their glasses sat close together on the bedside table. The rising sun caught the rim, spraying a wash of red light over the pile of abandoned clothes beside the bed. Will could see the arm of his shirt resting over a fold in Hannibal’s pajama

pants and it makes him smile. Hannibal kisses it away. He had carried the bottle upstairs too, sat it beside their glasses and then kissed Will firmly.

The idea of rich red wine mixes well with Hannibal's bedroom, but it feels strangely wrong. Like communion wine drank in the pews, all the right things, right places, but the wrong context. As though Will is trespassing a sacred space, ready to violate it, degrade it.

Hannibal's mouth drifts to Will's throat. The stubble of Hannibal's jaw prickled his skin, but he lifted his chin, and swallowed *mea culpa*. Sacrosanct or not, he had been invited here.

*Of course you were invited,* he thought, in a voice that sounded like his father's. *He doesn't know any better. He doesn't know what's wrong with you.*

Hannibal parts his thighs with gentle hands, and Will lets him. Early on in their courtship - for that's what it had been, even if neither had admitted it aloud; but then, wasn't that half the joy of it? To see him, and *wonder?* - Hannibal had told him of an imago.

He had said he had an imago of Will that he carried with him. Will hadn't spoken aloud at the time, but he had thought about how an imago was also a term for an insect. Once that horror of an animal had reached its adult state, burst from a small cocoon of its young, dead self, grew its slimy wings it was an imago.

Like some filthy, buzzing horror, it was also the only time an insect could be sexually mature. Hannibal's lips were stained with merlot, and he wondered if he was leaving ghost prints of his mouth along his body. Will's fingers wound in his silky hair. A few strands snapped under the intensity of his grip.

Hannibal didn't seem to mind, but Will could feel the itch at his back, a burn at his shoulder-blades as Hannibal swallowed him down; as though some great, slimy wings were burrowing outward.

# Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

3 things
1. this is mighty fucked up ! tws: for explicit talk of rape
2. i took up gardening recently and my first seed buy was sweet williams
3. the trailer i mention is based on the one i grew up in for two years in as a child. the doors really do that. it fuckin sucked. does anyone know the kinda doors im talkin about? they didn't latch into the wall, they had this sticky-out plastic thing that sank into a joined rubber seal and latched like that. so they only had an external knob that didn't turn, and from the inside you just pushed the door and it swung open? almost like a cupboard door? and they'd pop open all the time for no damn reason. google is giving me nothing. what the fuck was with those doors man?

“It must have been difficult as a child, if your father’s actions were well-known in your hometown,” Hannibal said. He unbuttoned his jacket neatly with one hand as he returned to his seat, a clear invitation to Will to join him in the matching chair.

“We moved around a lot,” Will said dismissively. “But uh...yeah, I guess. Longest we stayed somewhere was two years, in a trailer park when I was fifteen, ‘till I was almost seventeen. That one was the hardest,” he added. He didn’t take Hannibal’s implicit offer of a seat, instead slowing at the corner of Hannibal’s desk to examine a small paperweight.

“Why?”

“I don’t know, I just…” The paperweight had a significant heft to it, expensive and smooth as Will rubbed his thumb over it. It was an orange-sized purple hunk of gem-like rock, almost other-worldly. “That’s when most people knew. My dad, he’s pretty smart. He was smart then, too.

He only ever took boys who were poor, or homeless, or whose families were all broken up, alcoholic mothers and the like. Boys who were either too afraid to not be believed, or boys who had nobody to believe them. I guess rape for boys is a little different. Where we always lived, we were poor, and strong. All men were. You drank hard, you worked hard, and you lived hard,” Will said, as he stroked Hannibal’s expensive paperweight.

“Being abused like that, it’s not just a violation, it’s a complete domination. Those boys wouldn’t tell anyone they were hurt like that, because that would mean that not only had a stronger man pinned you down and taken your masculinity, but also that everyone would know.

Telling someone wouldn't change what had happened. They had a choice, pretend it didn't happen and have no one know the shame, or tell someone and have everyone know, have everyone know exactly how you let a man take your power. That's just how people saw it, then, there. Rape was something that happened to girls, girls you didn't know.

No poor boy was gonna go crying to the cops about a transient dock worker hurting them. My father, he... He doesn't seem like it, but he thinks he is the most powerful man in the room.

It's not that he thinks he needs to be dominant, but rather that he just thinks that's the natural order of things, that those boys needed someone to take care of them. Someone stronger. He thinks it's his right to subjugate them, to make them lose their power in order to submit to him.

Then he thinks he'll take care of them. That was one of the first scenes I ever made, you know," Will said, softly. He placed the paperweight back onto the notebook it rested on.

"One of your father's?" Hannibal pressed, carefully.

"Yeah," Will said, so softly and matter-of-fact that Hannibal's heart hurt quietly. "I came home from school one day, early. I skipped my last class because I didn't think my dad was gonna be home. Thought he was workin'. I remember I had had a real shitty day, gotten into a fight with an older kid, ripped up my bluejeans at the knee. I remember I was pissed off as I came in home, and I threw my bag into the hall.

We were living in a trailer at the time, this little thing where all the walls were made of this sagging plasterboard, and the doors would pop open with the air pressure. My backpack, it hit the kitchen wall, where my dad's bedroom backed onto and the door popped right open and I looked in automatically and just… Saw it. Saw everything. It's like… I don't know, it's like as if time just doesn't go on anymore, you take in every details in like a painting, it's like a story.

My dad was lying on his back, sleeping and snorin', though it was the middle of the day and the sheets were all rucked up around his waist. He was naked, and the pillow he wasn't lyin' on was in the middle of the bed.

The window was cranked wide open, and there was a pair of boy's work boots, separated, one by the door, like it had been slipped out of. The other was at the foot of the bed, still tied, like it had been pulled off as an afterthought.

The whole room smelled like… like thick sweat and dirty sheets and fear. I saw what had happened then, but not like how I had semi-constructed scenes before. Before, it was like watching a movie. I could see what had happened, but not always why, and it was the 'why' that left me behind. But that day, it wasn't like a movie.

I was my dad, and I was that boy, all at once. I could see how my father had wrestled that boy into his room and shut it behind him, and stripped him so hard and fast he lost one shoe, but not the other.

I saw my dad, in my head, pin that boy down onto the mattress and put a pillow under his hips and rape him. How the boy kicked at him with the boot he was still wearin'. How my dad grabbed that boot and yanked it off, didn't untie it, just dragged it off the kid and pinned him down.

And how when he was done, the boy climbed through the window and ran by the river into the woods so fast he didn't even stop to pick his boots back up. Just shoved his clothes on, and left through the window so didn't nobody have to watch him walk out through the trailer park."

"Many would call your father a monster," Hannibal said. "Would you?"

"No, I don't think so."

"You don't think your father's actions are monstrous?" Hannibal asked.

"I think they're… human. They're evil, and they're terrifying, but they're not any less human for it," Will said.

"Does that frighten you?" Hannibal asked. Will rounded the table and sank into the chair in front of Hannibal slowly.

"What?"

"That your father's scenes are evil, but they are wholly human. The idea that humanity is so inescapable."

"My father's not inescapable. I've escaped him before."

"But he's always found you," Hannibal said. "Have you truly escaped him? Have any of those poor boys ever escaped him?"

Will's fingertips were cold, a bad sign of an oncoming anxiety attack. He tucked his hands into fists and buried them in his pockets. The material of his jacket vibrated lightly with his faint trembling.

"I don't know," he said at last.

"You don't know only because your father has not yet raped you," Hannibal pressed. "He has abused you sexually-"

"No, he hasn't!" Will interjected. "He never touched me."

Hannibal paused for a moment, tilted his head minutely. "Knowing exactly how your father raped boys, knowing he did that because he wanted to do it to you, knowing your father was sexually attracted to you, and knowing that he drugged you on at least one occasion to take you into his bed and fondle you, you would not call that sexual abuse?"

"It's hard to draw a line," Will whispered. "Between what I think my father wants because of my empathy, or what I fear he wants. It's like an endless feedback loop, I fear my father, my

father senses this and sees me as a thing to be protected. His mind tells him that the best way to soothe me is like a dominant dog, pin me down and make me submissive, then take care of me. I sense what he wants through my empathy… And it just goes on and on."

"Do you fear your father?" Hannibal asked, picking through Will's words like he always did, grabbing the most painful stitch and tugging on it, unwinding. Will paused for a long moment. It felt like remembering prayers from childhood in a murder scene; like bringing blasphemy to light.

"What powers your relationship with him? Is it love? Or is it the knowledge that if you truly abandon him, he will become even more obsessed with finding men like you and hurting them? What is your primary emotion for your father, is it truly love, or is it fear?"

"I fear my father," Will said, after a long silence. The words felt like a benediction and a betrayal all at once.

# Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

couple things:
1. trigger warnings: mentions of incest and non-con, as well as heavy manipulation, and mentions of terminal illness (will's mother, no main character)
2. this is fucked up !
3. i planted my sweet william flowers a while ago and they're due to germinate on my birthday, the 26th, isn't that awesome

“When was the first time you truly feared your father?”

Will’s thumb flipped the edge of a book slowly, working it up and down rhythmically, carefully.

He didn’t respond, and Hannibal would have thought he hadn’t heard if his breathing hadn’t quickened the barest bit. He placed the book back on its shelf, and let himself down the ladder quietly.

Hannibal recognised the gesture, Will’s movement into Hannibal’s space as he readied himself to discuss intimate information. He smiled at Will encouragingly and Will understood, as quickly and easily as he always had and gave him an exasperated look in return.

Hannibal held Will’s elbow gently as he stepped from the last two rungs of the ladder. Will leaned into Hannibal’s grasp minutely.

“Things were pretty good when I was a kid. I guess, maybe once I grew up a little… I don’t remember being comfortable with him, really,” Will offered, a neat side-step around the question. He shook himself abruptly, like a wet dog, before he took his seat, as though he was shaking off the question.

Hannibal matched him, and eased himself into the opposite armchair, unbuttoning his jacket neatly.

“Why?” Hannibal asked, just to watch Will squirm prettily.

“He thought I looked like my mother,” Will said.

“Do you?”

“I don’t know,” Will said dryly. “Haven't seen Ella-May in a few decades.”

“When she was alive, did you resemble her? Or was your father imprinting that idea on you?” Hannibal corrected. Will shifted in discomfort.

“I always kinda looked like her. We both had blue eyes, and the same hair, the same bone structure. It started becoming obvious when I was about eleven. Then, the jokes started.”

“The jokes?”

“My mother. Before she got sick, she used to tease my dad, she’d say stuff about how I looked just like her, about how she didn’t even need Beau, since I was just a carbon copy of her. Say she didn’t even need Beau’s help making me ‘cause I was just a younger version of her, like a clone. I think he felt…”

“You think?” Hannibal said harshly, almost abruptly. Will startled for a moment before he blinked, then nodded slowly.

“No, you’re right. I knew. I know what he felt. He felt like she was pushing him away from me. Distancing him...distancing him from his paternal claim on me. Maybe she was. Maybe she knew more about him than I did at the time.

But God, it pissed him off. He had all this fury just building and building up, and then my mom got sick and it had nowhere to go. Because she was ill, she didn’t need a a man like him anymore, she needed someone soft...a nurse, not a warrior. So, he just... ate up his anger. Let it fester.”

“How was his anger purged?” Hannibal pressed.

“Slowly,” Will answered. “You asked me the first time I really feared my dad. I was fourteen. It would be another six months before my mother died, but she was well on her way out.

She spent all her days sleeping and vomiting, and her nights wailing with the pain. My dad just…

That anger. It just stayed inside, because he couldn’t visit it on my mother. I was sitting on our tiny sofa, I remember it was so quiet and my mother was sleeping.

My dad was right next to me. I was trying to be quiet because my mom was resting, but I knocked a book right off my lap onto the floor, and it banged, loud. And I flinched and looked at my dad and he just shook his head, and told me not to worry so much.

And I knew then that he had drugged her. I didn’t really… I didn’t feel awful about it.

They were my pills, they were supposed to stop me sleepwalking at night, sedate me. I knew he had given her some, so she could sleep. That was ok, I was glad she was sleeping. But then… I don’t know. He looked so…” Will struggled, his fingers flexing and relaxing in a quickening motion.

“You ever seen a gator, before it strikes? When it’s hungry. They get this... prehistoric look.

Their eyes lower and it looks like their muscles tighten. They look... *mean*, and primal, and *hungry*. That's the only way I can describe him. My dad, he wound his hand into my hair. I had long hair then, a little less than shoulder-length, I guess.

And he just wrapped his hand around my curls and held me for a minute while he looked at me. He made me look into his eyes," Will whispered. "He knew I hated it. He knew I could see exactly what he wanted. And I just jerked away, I pulled my head away even though my hair was all caught up in his fingers, and his rings, and he smacked me across the face."

Will paused for a moment, reliving the memory.

"I tried to get up, to run, but he grabbed my hair again, and picked me up with his other hand, tucked me against his chest like a fussing baby. And I was kickin' and hollerin' but my mom wasn't making any kind of noise, not even the rattling wheeze she usually made when she was sleepin' so I thought all of a sudden *this is it, she's dead, and he's never gonna let me go*.

He carried me into the bedroom where she was. Put me down on the bed, on his side, right beside her. She was face-down on her pillow, sleeping, and I remember looking at her while my dad went to the bathroom and came back. She was clammy, and cold, and her skin was this grey colour.

I tried to touch her shoulder, maybe wake her up but I couldn't wake her, and I was too afraid to shake her. My dad came back and caught me in between his knees, so I'm sitting on his lap, caught in his legs while he holds my hair with his left hand. I could feel a little pinch, this tiny curl that got wound up in his jewellery while he worked his hand into my hair, and I remember thinking how badly it hurt, and how strange that was, that such a tiny thing, that didn't even leave a mark could hurt so bad.

Then I heard the buzzing. And he was holding my hair in tight fistfuls, and shaving my head with his right hand. He was talking about me, hissing at me, about how pretty I looked like that, *yelling* at me that I was *pretty*, like I was trying to piss him off.

The buzzer was digging into my scalp, leaving these long streaks of red, scratching up my skin while he buzzed my hair off. I remember how itchy it felt at these locks of hair snowed around me, and I was so furious that all I could do was sit there silently and take it. Have you ever been that scared and angry, that all you could do was take it?"

"Yes," Hannibal said, quietly. Will's fingers were shaking subtly, so Hannibal leaned forward and held him by the wrists gently. Will's breath evened slowly.

"I guess he got about halfway done when he started crying. He stopped pulling on my hair, and started stroking whatever curls I had left, and shaving them neatly and gently. He buried his face into the back of my neck, and sniffed at me, and sobbed, and I didn't know what to do.

He was pulling these clumps of hair from around my shoulders and shaving the rest of my hair off and then pulling the handfuls to his face and sobbing into them, rubbing his cheek against them and sniffing them.

I tried to get up, to get away but he was holding onto the last chunks of hair I had left. I couldn't get away from him until he finished shaving my head.

I remember I broke forward, like I was about to sprint, and then I looked back at him, crying, and sitting beside my drugged mother, surrounded by my hair and I stopped moving. I don't know why. I should have run. But he was my dad.

He dropped the buzzer off the side of the bed, onto the floor and he cried proper, and held his arms out to me and I … I went to him. And he stroked my shaved head and kissed it and held me. He said *"you look so much like your goddamn mother"* and…"

Hannibal let Will trail off, his hands were the shaky white-cold that signalled an oncoming panic attack. He wrapped his hands around Will's and warmed them, until he stopped shaking.

"What happened then, Will?" Hannibal said. Will shook his head.

"I understand," Hannibal pushed. "I know. It's alright, dear. Tell me what happened."

"He kissed me," Will gasped. He lungs expanded harsh and rough, like a drowning man pulled to the surface. He choked for breath while his hands flexed inside Hannibal's gentle fists.

"He held my head and kissed me on the mouth and I didn't know what to do, I didn't know, so I just let him. I just let him."

Hannibal eased Will out of his armchair, pressed him over to the chaise lounge and went willingly when Will pulled him down to sit beside him. Their knees touched as Hannibal took Will's hands again, while the clock kept time quietly behind them.

It was so dark outside that the occasional car passing was rare enough to warrant Hannibal lifting his eyes and checking the movement of light. Some time passed, minutes while Hannibal held Will's hands gently.

His fingertips traced warm, soothing circles into Will's skin. Will's breathing regulated slowly, aligning with the gentle rhythm of the clock and Hannibal's easy breaths.

"Would you like to talk about what happened the other night?" Hannibal asked, eventually. Will shut his eyes.

"With Abel Gideon?"

"After Abel Gideon," Hannibal corrected. Will didn't respond, his fingers flexing neatly.

"Would you like to talk about what happened between *us*, the other night?" Hannibal clarified.

“What’s to talk about?” Will whispered. His eyes were still closed. Hannibal’s fingertips were still stroking slow and easy over his skin. His chest felt sore.

“Anything you like,” Hannibal replied easily. Will didn’t respond appropriately, so Hannibal removed his touch. Will’s eyes opened when Hannibal let go of his hands, his lashes darkly flashing briefly over the curve of his pale cheek.

“We slept together,” Will said sharply. “What do you want to *talk* about?”

Hannibal didn’t rise to the bait, but he allowed his right hand to alight on Will’s knee gently in reward.

“I would like to see you, again, Will,” Hannibal said.

“You’re seeing me right now,” Will said, spreading his hands either side in a demeaning gesture. “More of me than anyone has ever seen. Isn’t this enough?”

“Not for me,” Hannibal whispered.

Then, abruptly, and delightfully, Will said: “I’m not seeing another goddamn therapist. I’m not… I’m not going through all this shit with another doctor and then coming home and having to tell you the exact same shit, if I’m doing it at all, I’m doing it once.”

Swallowing his sudden wonder, Hannibal took Will’s hand. “People will say it’s unethical,” he warned.

“They don’t need to know,” Will said, wonderfully, beautifully. He squeezed Will’s hands, the pale bones moving under thin skin, strong and beautiful, though they looked fragile.

“We can just… Tell them you’re my doctor, and we’re friends, and if we really need to tell people we’re… together-” he said with a swallow, a shaking movement where he checked Hannibal’s eyes for a reaction. Hannibal petted his wrist instead, with great and entirely genuine affection. “-then hell, we’ll.... We’ll burn that bridge when we get to it.”

He was so wonderfully, stunningly fascinating and dangerous in that moment that Hannibal laid his hand to the gentle curve of the back of Will’s neck. His fingertips caught in the baby hairs of brown curls when he pulled Will forward and kissed his mouth gently, easily.

The movement back to the centre of the room almost made Hannibal smile, as Will stood from the chaise and returned to his armchair, his signal of stepping back into therapy so wonderfully overt.

“Why do you think he kissed you, then?” Hannibal asked, and for a terrifying moment Will didn’t know if Hannibal was referring to himself or his father. His stomach swooped, and bile tickled the back of his throat as he swallowed compulsively.

“When your hair was cut,” Hannibal went on, as though he were unaware of the panic he had set in Will.

“I don’t know,” Will replied, almost automatically. Hannibal watched him for a long moment and Will fiddled with his sleeve.

“Why do you think your father waited until he had shaved your head to kiss you?” Hannibal pressed. He leaned forward in his chair and Will mirrored him wonderfully, leaning back instinctively.

“I don’t-”

“Yes, you do,” Hannibal pushed. “You do know. Tell me why.”

“Hannibal- Doctor Lecter-”

“You know. You know he never kissed you before then, he shaved your head, and then he kissed you, because without your curls you didn’t look like your mother anymore, did you?”

“Don’t-”

“He didn’t kiss you because you were a reflection of your mother, Will, did he? He kissed you because without your hair you looked like nobody except yourself. He didn’t do this to you because you were just like your mother, Will, he did this because you are like no one else, isn’t that right?”

“I don’t kno-”

“Don’t lie to me,” Hannibal said, and suddenly his voice was low, almost dangerous and Will gasped for breath.

“He doesn’t want you because you look like his wife. He wants you because you are yourself, and he is obsessed with you, isn’t he, he adores you, he is in love with you.”

“Please don’t do this,” Will whispered.

“Your father is in love with you, and it is not your mother’s fault.”

“It’s not my fault!” Will gasped, a fine sheen of sweat over his delicate face. Hannibal allowed a moment or two to pass, for Will to tremble and silently beg for Hannibal’s mercy.

“No,” Hannibal allowed, finally. Will’s fists clenched as he sighed.

“It’s not your fault. You haven’t done anything. It’s *his* fault.”

# Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

> the wonderful IvanaeSilvia made another fabulous gifset of the scene between will and beau right here. thank you darling!

The first thing Will does when he wakes up is feed and water the dogs. The second is go to Home Depot.

He buys paint he doesn't need, dowelling rods he kind of needs and at the bottom of the cart he puts a lock. When he gets home, he folds up the pull-out couch he's been sleeping on since he started sleepwalking. He goes upstairs, a place he hasn't been since he woke up in his shorts on his roof. He clears out the main bedroom and cleans it carefully, filling far too many trash bags with empty bottles of Wild Turkey, and dirty clothes that have practically solidified.

Once it's picked up, he moves to the other bedroom, the one furthest from the master. It's not filled with crap, like his own had been since nobody has ever used this one since Beau. It is embarrassingly dusty, though. He uses an entire pack of surface wipes clearing the dust and dog hair from the sparse furniture.

He makes up the twin bed with new sheets. When he's finished there, sweat beading and dripping down his back like light rain, he returns to the master bedroom and uses another half-pack of wipes cleaning it down. He makes up the double bed he hasn't used in months with fresh linens and when he's done the whole room smells white and clean, lemon-fresh. Then, he places a torn-open trash bag under his door and installs the new lock.

He picks Beau up from the motel late in the evening. Beau throws his duffel bag in the back of Will's car, carefully avoiding Winston. Will would have let Winston into the front, but that would have put Beau in the backseat and Will didn't want him behind him.

"Hey, puppy," Beau greets, and offers a hand back for Winston to sniff. Winston sits, stoic and does not deign to Beau's hand, though his head twitches slightly, as if he's confused by this strange man who smells so much like his master.

"You'll be alone, tonight," Will says as he pulls out of the parking lot. "I have therapy."

"Therapy's gonna take you all night?" Beau says, sceptically and Will hunches his shoulders as he indicates into the right lane.

"Therapy, then dinner," he amends. Winston slumps down in the backseat, resting his fluffy head on his paws. His breathing is snuffly, and loud in the tense air.

“Where are you having dinner?” Beau asks and Will’s hands tighten on the wheel.

“With Hannibal,” Will says, and Will grips the steering wheel so tightly the leather creaks. There is silence for a few moments, but for Winston’s breathing and the rumble of road under the balding tyres.

“Are you having dinner with your therapist?” Beau says, and Will grunts in response. A blue van honks behind them and Will speeds up appropriately. Beau is silent.

“We’re not officially therapist and patient,” Will replies, eventually.

“What are you?”

“Friends,” Will says, and sucks his lower lip into his mouth out of habit, a tell he has had since he was a child. Beau regards him heavily.

“Is he taking advantage of you?” Beau asks eventually. Will has to pull over and put on the hazards while he laughs so bitterly that tears stream down his cheeks.

He takes Beau home and puts his duffel on the twin bed of the spare room. They don’t talk about Will’s fit of hysterics. Instead, Beau picks up Buster and strokes behind his ears gently, while he watches Will get ready to leave for therapy.

“Are you going to be home at all, tonight?” Beau asks. Buster wriggles in his grip. Will wants to correct him, wants to tell him *this is not your home, this is mine* but he won’t upset Beau while he’s holding Buster’s neck with strong, thick white hands.

“I don’t know,” Will says, instead. Beau puts Buster down, and Buster runs from the room, abandoning them both in search of his brethren.

“This ain’t right,” Beau says and Will bites back a terrible grin. He is so focused on schooling his anger that when Beau steps to him, he is already at his limit.

“Because he’s my coworker, or because he ain’t my *fathe*-”

A harsh loud slap shocks Will into silence, his mouth dropping open in shock. Beau’s handprint burned red on his cheek.

“Did you… did you just smack me?”

Beau doesn’t answer, but his fists are clenched beside his thighs.

“I’m a grown fucking man,” Will says, marvelling. “You can’t slap me like I’m a kid anymore.”

“No. No, you’re not a kid, anymore,” Beau says and Will’s stomach turns over abruptly.

“Don’t put your fuckin’ hands on me,” Will says, his voice low and dangerous.

“Don’t you fuckin’ speak to me like that!” Beau shouts, suddenly. Will almost flinches in response, but he catches himself just in time and snarls instead, an animal response to an animal instinct. His heat is beating fast enough that he can see it through his shirt. Beau doesn’t hit him again when he steps to him this time, he grabs him by the hair with his right hand and the wrist with the left.

Will can’t move with his curls snatched so harshly, but he tosses his elbow swiftly. He catches Beau in the torso, but slamming his elbow into the hard cage of Beau’s ribs seems to hurt him more than it hurts Beau. Will is sweating and gasping, but Beau’s hands are faster than his, and he is stronger, so much stronger, he has inches and half a hundred pounds on Will, easily. Beau’s breath is infuriatingly even as he slams Will forward onto his stomach. Will lifts his face up in instinct, but the hard smack of wooden floor doesn’t come. Instead, it is much worse. He is pinned to the twin bed, on his stomach. His hair is snatched out by the root by how he tosses his head wildly, but Beau puts a knee low on Will’s back, pressing into his spine. Will cannot breathe, but even as he bucks he can see a small drop of sweat pearl at the end of his nose and drip to the clean sheets. Beau isn’t sweating. He is barely out of breath as he presses Will into the mattress. He kneels, his left knee on the mattress, pressed tight against Will’s hip, the other digging into Will’s spine. His hand tightens in Will’s hair, tugging his curls.

“Shhhh.”

Will yells in response, a nonsensical yelp like a dog being trod on. Beau shakes his head roughly, and Will bites his own tongue by accident. Warm blood fills his mouth, and he swallows it reflexively.

“Don’t you ever fuckin’ talk to me like that again, you little bitch,” Beau says, softly, so softly that Will tastes bile in the back of his throat.

Beau continues to hush him, his free hand holding the headboard tightly for leverage. Will’s wild bucking subsides when he can’t move anymore. He has a cramp in his lower stomach. His scalp is raw with how tightly Beau is holding his hair. A thin trail of blood is sticky and warm on his cheekbone, where Beau’s ring caught him during the smack. Will’s breath is too shallow like this, with Beau’s weight heavy on his back he can’t expand his diaphragm enough to suck in the air he needs from his tossing.

“Are you gonna quit it?” Beau asks after a while, and his accent runs it into *quitit*, a strong and nostalgic Southern twang. Will won’t respond, but Beau’s knee is pressing so hard on his spine and Will knows he’s been stabbed, knows he’s been punched and beaten and operated on, but right now he can’t think of anything ever having hurt as much as his father’s knee jammed into his lower spine. His blood is thrumming in his wrists, and his vision is starting to sport black dots, floating gently over what he can see with his face pinned sideways like this.

“I’ll be good,” he says. Beau gets off him, but Will can’t get enough air into his lungs to let him move for a long time.

“If you do not want him in your home, then why is he there?” Hannibal poses the question as though it is as simple as that. Will is comfortably full of good food, and warm by the firelight in Hannibal’s dining room. His cheek is mildly irritated, but Hannibal had cleaned and placed a band-aid across the scratch when he had arrived.

“He has nowhere else to go,” Will says. “He lost the house when he was in jail. Couldn’t pay the mortgage.” Hannibal doesn’t respond, but he tilts his head gently. He unfolds his hands and stands carefully. Hannibal is slow to move around Will and Will appreciates it more than he will ever say aloud. Hannibal does not move swiftly towards him, he is cautious without being obvious. It is an overwhelmingly relaxing feeling to not be afraid. Hannibal refills his wine glass with a care and tenderness that does not befit the act.

“Is this a fact, or is this only what your father has said?” Hannibal poses.

“You think he’s lying?”

“I think it is a possibility,” Hannibal says. “More accurately, I do not think you should take anything your father says at face value.”

“I can’t exactly afford to keep him in a motel forever,” Will says instead. He takes the glass from Hannibal’s hand. Hannibal’s fingertip strokes the inside curve of his palm gently, deliberately as he passes it.

“If you would allow me to help-”

“No,” Will says automatically.

“He frightens you,” Hannibal says gently. “I would not have you terrified in your own home, not by him.”

“You can’t pay for him to live somewhere else, Hannibal, that’s not ok. I can’t ask that of you.”

“You are not asking,” Hannibal presses. “I am offering.”

“I can’t. I can’t just pack him up and move him out. Technically, he’s homeless. He’s my *dad*, Hannibal,” Will says, and he does not know how to articulate all that that entails.

“Then at least let me give you a refuge,” Hannibal says. “Allow me to extend an open invitation, please. Whenever you need space, either alone, or simply time away from your father, please come to my house. Call me and I will pick you up, or arrive.”

Will doesn’t respond immediately, he can’t, his fingers pressed to his mouth. His cutlery flashes in the firelight.

“I would be greatly soothed to know that you had a place to go,” Hannibal added. “I have many guest rooms you are free to utilise.”

“You really want me to stay in your guest room?” Will asked in a quiet, almost-smirking whisper. Hannibal conceded, resting a hand on Will’s knee lightly.

“If you need time alone,” he said, neatly sidestepping. Will’s eyebrows furrowed slightly, the corners of his mouth upturning slightly.

“And where will I stay when I don’t need time alone?” Will says. Hannibal is filled with such a sudden affection that he cannot allow himself to minimise it. Instead, he leans forward and presses a kiss to Will’s relaxed mouth. He tastes of wine and sweet honey and faintly of blood, and Hannibal is in love.

Hannibal’s hands are overwhelming, in such a way that Will cannot even focus on anything else when they are on him. Not even the lazy, intense kisses Hannibal is giving him. Hannibal kisses with his whole body, as though he cannot get close enough to Will. His hands press Will’s body into his, their skin together and growing over-warm in the bedroom.

His hips roll forward, a slow, languorous roll that has Will gripping his shoulders tightly. Will’s thighs are open, Hannibal’s strong hips between his legs, catching on the fine hair on the sensitive skin.

“Please,” Will moans before he knows he is going to speak.

“Yes,” Hannibal agrees, but he does not give Will what he wants, until he has gotten what he wants. What he wants, appears to be to taste Will in his most intimate spots, a soft wet flick of tongue behind the silky patch of skin behind his ear, a slow, sucking kiss in the dip of his collarbone, a drowsy kiss to his hard nipple. Hannibal moves between his thighs, lifting his right leg with care and laying Will’s ankle over his shoulder.

He does not put his mouth where Will wants it, instead pressing a trail of kisses along the tender inside of his thigh. When he reaches the softly furred juncture of pubic bone and hip, Hannibal licks and Will shivers. Hannibal kisses him there, where his scent is strong and his skin sensitive, his clever, wet mouth sucking blood to the surface of the skin.

“Hannibal,” Will gasps. His cock drips a single, clear pearl of pre-ejaculate onto the dark hair of his belly.

“Indeed,” Hannibal says with such gravity that Will laughs. Hannibal peers up at him from between his thighs, his face regal and pinkish in the firelight, his hair loosened from its style by Will’s hands.

He is smiling, in that almost-open, barely-there way he smiles. He looks warm, and soft and strong, and Will has an incredibly great affection for the bare softness of Hannibal’s stomach, a gentle layer of soft fat over strong muscles. Hannibal looks drowsy with affection, and Will shuts his eyes for a moment, swallowing hard.

“Will you fuck me?” He asks, and Hannibal presses a kiss to the slight curve of Will’s hipbone before he answers.
“Not tonight, dear,” he says. Will is almost disappointed, but then Hannibal’s warm, wet mouth is tracing up the underside of his cock and he forgets it. Hannibal is as slow and careful here with Will as he is everywhere else, Will thinks. He is moving too slowly and

gently for Will to get off, and he almost tells him so before he catches Hannibal's eye and understands.

This is how it will be because this is how Hannibal wants it. He will come, he is sure, but Hannibal wishes to do this slowly and carefully. Will lets his body relax, sinking into the thick plushness of Hannibal's mattress, forcing his breaths to slow and regulate. Hannibal doesn't say anything, or smile, but he looks at Will intently, and Will can feel that sense of pride Hannibal has of him.

Hannibal is proud of Will for understanding without having to be told. Hannibal will give it to him. But Hannibal wants him to be patient, so Will is going to be patient. It takes years, it feels like, while Hannibal sucks his cock. He is so sensitive that the faint exhale of Hannibal's breath over his body is enough to make him tremble. Hannibal's fingers are warm and solid on Will's lower back, neatly bracketing the bruise on his spine. Hannibal watches him moan, his mouth a warm tightness around his cock, his tongue dipping into the slit of Will's cock every now and then. Will is overwhelmingly aware of every part of his body, his lips pink from wine and swollen from kisses, his nipples hard and still wet from Hannibal's mouth, the tiny trail of a single bead of sweat on the inside of his knee, the slow, langourous suck of Hannibal's mouth. He has rarely felt so present and welcome in his own body. Hannibal's back is strong and muscled nicely, and Will watches the smooth roll and stretch of muscles and the rhythmic bob of Hannibal's head.

The muscles of his lower stomach, in his pelvis are tightening up slowly, the intense insistence low in his stomach that precides an earth-shattering orgasm, and he is so close, hovering on the precipice when Hannibal's mouth lifts from him. He gasps sharply, in absolute betrayal and Hannibal huffs a faint sound of amusement over his cock. It throbs and Will gasps in time with his heartbeat.

"W-why-" is all he can manage, his voice demanding and almost whiny to his own ears, when Hannibal turns him over gently but firmly. Will is laid out on Hannibal's mattress, his dripping cock nestled into silky sheets as Hannibal slots in between Will's spread legs. Hannibal traces his mouth from the baby hairs of Will's curls to the soft, sensitive place between the wings of his shoulder-blades. He presses gentle kisses into the skin, his mouth warm and insistent as he sucks marks onto him. His fingertips trail down either wide of Will's torso, so lightly that Will shivers.

"I noticed this earlier," Hannibal says. He hooks his chin carefully over Will's shoulder. "This bruise on your spine. What happened?"

"I don't want to talk about it," Will says, because he does not want to lie to Hannibal. Hannibal has thick, greying chest hair and it feels extraordinarily pleasant and dominant while Hannibal presses his chest to Will's back.

"But you will, won't you?" Hannibal presses and Will shuts his eyes as Hannibal's cock aligns with the crack of his ass, his thighs bracketing Hannibal's neatly.

"During the fight with my dad," Will gasps, and Hannibal kisses the back of his neck gently. "He knelt on my back."

“Did you like it?” Hannibal asks and Will stills.

“No,” he says.

“I understand if you did,” Hannibal whispers into his ear, and Will’s traitorous body shivers in response. “It is natural to respond to such primal instincts.”

“It is?” Will whispers back and Hannibal crowds him even closer, pressing him right into the sheets.

“It is,” he confirms. “Do you feel like an animal?”

“I did, then,” Will says quietly. “I don’t want that- I don’t like it, but. Sometimes it is nice to know exactly where you stand.”

“I understand,” Hannibal says, with a faint reverence in his tone.

“Yes,” Will says and he takes Hannibal’s hand in his. “It’s not him. I’m not… attracted to him. It wasn’t sexual. It’s just important to-to understand.”

“I understand,” Hannibal says and Will marvels for a moment at this man atop him. He has no judgement in his tone, and he has not thrown Will from the room in disgust. Instead, he has welcomed Will into his bed, into his mouth.

“Thank you,” Will says quietly.

“For what?”

“For not judging me,” he says in a whisper and Hannibal kisses the curve of his neck.

“I will never judge you,” he says, his voice low, and serious.

Hannibal pins Will down when he makes him come, his strong body heavy and grounding on him. Hannibal’s hips rest against Will’s ass and his unrelenting pressure make it so Will can’t shy away from the stimulation as his body is prone to during orgasm, often cutting his climax short.

Instead, Hannibal rolls his hips, a firm, unrelenting pressure that forces Will’s cock into his hand. He does not let him loose when he twitches away, instead he follows him and milks his cock, forcing his orgasm to continue for longer than it ever has before. Will cries into the pillow with pleasure when he’s finished and Hannibal finally lets go of his cock.

# Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

The cats ate my Sweet Williams.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will looked at the night sky through a film, like a pale shutter. He watched the trails of stars move with the wind, great, lumbering creatures hidden in the navy clouds. His hands rose and laid against his own head. He watched the stars, like lit portholes of some endless ship. He blinked and his eyes clicked dryly, and the shutter released, joining his conscious mind to his slumber.

When Will awoke, he was standing in the frosted grass of Hannibal's back garden. His toes were blue with the cold and his calves were tight, like he had been standing there for some time. After a moment, he turned to a low, soothing voice, and realised it was Hannibal who had awakened him.

He held his upper arm gently, his hand chilled and locked onto Will's bicep. He was shaking him carefully, now, Will realised.

Will was more than shivering with the cold, he was shuddering, in great tremors of gasping breath. Hannibal pulled him around gently, to try to lead him back into the house. The first step felt like agony, like stepping onto hot blades as the blood returned to his feet.

The hairs on his legs were dusted with frost, and curiously hard. Stepping into the kitchen, with Hannibal's hand around him was like stepping into an oven. His feet slipped, numb from the cold and Hannibal caught him.

"-woke and you had left, and it took some time to wake you-"

The tile was cooling rapidly under his feet, and it was more comfortable than the warmth. Will watched his feet, saw the blue slowly recede, like a great pool of water. His toes pinked with the chill and he flexed them experimentally against the floor. Daggers of pain shot up his feet, driving wedges into his bare legs. Now, that he thought about it, his legs were very cold too. His fingertips were numb and faintly blue, so Will tucked his hands under his armpits to warm them.

"Didn't you wake when I got out of bed?" He asked abruptly, interrupting Hannibal. Hannibal's face went curiously blank for a moment before he allowed a small frown to cross his face.

"I was sleeping," he said, a blank coldness in his voice. Will almost winced, and turned to him.

"I'm quiet when I sleepwalk. Sometimes I don't even wake the dogs," he said, as a peace offering. Hannibal began talking again, but Will wasn't listening. The prickling, hot sensation of warm blood returning to his extremities felt like minuscule ants crawling inside his veins.

His stomach lurched and he could see minute movements under the thin layer of delicate skin, black insects crawling inside the cool tunnels of his blood.

"-this is not sustainable-"
Will blinked away from his vision, to focus on Hannibal.

"What's not sustainable? Us?" He interrupted, the bottom of his stomach falling. Hannibal lifted his quickly warming hands to grip his cheeks, gently pressing his thumbs underneath the bruise-blue hollows of Will's eyes. Will swallows convulsively.

"No. We are sustainable," Hannibal said. His thumbs stroked Will's cheeks gently, warming them. "But the way you live is not. You cannot continue living like this."

Hannibal took him upstairs, to the guest bedroom. The en-suite there was small and warm, quickly filling with steam from the shower. The room heated up quickly, and Hannibal shut the door behind them, easing Will's boxers down his chilled legs.

He lifted each of Will's feet with care, placing each foot back on the warm tile when he was done.

He slipped his tshirt over his head as well, and Will shivered violently when the cold fabric slipped over his head. Hannibal wrapped warm arms around him, tucking Will neatly into the silky warmth of his clothed chest. Then, he opened the shower door and guided Will inside while he stripped. Alone for a moment, Will could not do much but avoid the the hot spray of water over his body.

"You must warm up," Hannibal was saying as he slipped into the shower behind him. "I know it will hurt, but-"

Will tuned him out again, distracted by how the water felt like shards of glass burning into his skin. He checked his arms to see if he was bleeding where the spray landed.

The skin was whole, but splattered with pink spots of skin, as though he was bruising from beneath. He flexed his fingers gently, opening his fists under the water.
Hannibal's hands were warm, and sensual as they stroked his upper arms, inviting heat into his skin through friction. Will tipped his head back and let it drop onto Hannibal's shoulder.

"You could have very seriously hurt yourself, we are lucky if you are not frostbitten-"

Will rolled his head, letting his forehead press against the vulnerable curve of Hannibal's throat.

"-did you want to hurt yourself?" Hannibal was asking him. Will sucked in a deep breath of steam, letting it warm him from the inside out.

"I don't know," he said. Hannibal's grip tightened around him, his hands dropping to Will's waist to hold him as though he were about to break free and fling himself through the window. His fingers flexed against his warming stomach, then relaxed, laying flat.

"Do you want to hurt yourself?" Hannibal amended.

"No," Will decided after a moment. "I just don't- I just don't want to go home. I don't want. I don't want to-"

"You don't want to leave here, or you don't want to return to your father?" Hannibal pressed.

"I don't- Both?" Will relented. "I don't want to leave here, I feel safe here, but I can't... I don't want to see my dad. He's... He's gonna ask questions about where I was, what I was doing. I don't want to answer him."

"Then, do not," Hannibal said as though it were so simple. "Do not return to him."

"He is my father, Hannibal, he is the only living relative I have. He raised me," Will said, coldly. "He's my dad."

"And yet your mind drives out to stand in my garden for hours, slowly freezing to death rather than return to him. I will not stand for this, Will."

"What?"

"I will not allow you to bury yourself to protect him. I will not allow him to hurt you," Hannibal was still talking but Will had dipped forward, watching his broad hands placed flat and firm on Will's stomach. His fingernail was stroking horizontally across the tender curve above his bellybutton, leaving a faint pink trail in the skin.

"Oh, my God," Will said to himself, almost silently. Hannibal's tracing stopped and his hands lifted gently, placed possessively on either side of his rib cage. Will saw Hannibal dig his fingertips in, pressing inexorably to the centre of him and ripping open, forcing his rib cage to swing readily outward.

He choked on his own hot breath and steam as he watched Hannibal dip his fingers inside him, digging into the soft, meaty parts of him. He thought of the warm, wet intimate slide of Hannibal’s fingers into the clinging pink tunnel of his rib cage, and he shivered.

Will blinked, and his mind shattered, exploded into the pale steamy light, and reformed. When he looked down, he saw Hannibal’s strong, gentlemanly hands stroking his lower stomach lovingly. He stood still and let Hannibal wash the frozen sweat from him.

“You killed Thomas King,” he said. Hannibal stilled and his warm hands stopped moving. Will curled his toes into the shower floor. Hannibal stood preternaturally still. Will spoke, so wholly in his own body that he was captivated by the feel of a slick bead of water easing its way down a curl pressed to his cheek, slip off and trail down his cheekbone.

“You tried to frame my father, by making it look like he had tried to frame the Chesapeake Ripper,” his said. His own voice seemed like a distant, alien thing, something raw that he had

never quite heard before. There was a pause while Hannibal stepped even closer to him, no longer pressed against him but pressed into him, his whole body cupping Will.

“Clever, wonderful boy,” Hannibal breathed to the top of Will’s head. He pressed a beatific kiss tightly to his curls and his hands slid slowly up Will’s chest, crossing over his heart.

“I couldn’t figure it out,” Will said softly. Hannibal’s body was so still and warm behind him, like he had stopped breathing. The long, slick line of his strong body was aligned with Will’s back sweetly.

“I didn’t get the tableau,” Will admitted. “Your plan didn’t work. Jack didn’t just assume my father killed King and tried to frame you.”

Hannibal’s hands tightened briefly, and Will was eased back more tightly against Hannibal’s chest. He was breathing faster now, the catch of his thick chest hair slicker and softer from the warm water.

“I didn’t think Jack would call you into the scene,” Hannibal admitted. “I thought he would be swifter to recognise the death of a prostitute as it collided with your father’s return to town. I was mistaken. I am sorry to further traumatise you.”

“No, you’re not,” Will snapped abruptly. He shoved Hannibal’s hands from his body harshly, almost snarling. “No, you are not sorry to traumatise me, admit that, at least, to me. It *interests* you, to traumatise me. Don’t lie to me, not anymore. I can see it, Hannibal.”

“Yes,” Hannibal breathed. He extended his right hand gently, like he was coaxing a skittish animal and he cupped Will’s face. “You do see it, don’t you?” He whispered, with a rapturous voice of wonder.

“Don’t lie to me, anymore,” Will said, after a moment. “I don’t…”

“What, dear Will?”

“I don’t want to be an animal anymore,” Will understood quietly. “I don’t want to submit to my father like he’s the alpha, I don’t want to show my throat and belly, I am sick of being the runt. I won’t be the omega dog anymore.”

“Then, don’t,” Hannibal said, as though it were so simple. “Reclaim your authority, my love. Become the alpha.”

Will stilled and lifted his hand to his chest, rubbing over his steady heart slowly. It was so simple. It really was.

“Take me to bed,” he instructed, a faint thrill of power under his skin. “Hannibal.”

“Yes, wonderful, beautiful boy?” Hannibal whispered, still in rapture.

“Don’t lie to me anymore. Don’t manipulate me. Not now. Not ever again. That is my condition. Do you agree?”

“Yes,” Hannibal said. “Yes, yes, yes.”

Chapter End Notes

i was excited to write a sleepwalking scene, because will and i both sleepwalk from trauma and that's the first time i was able to write that into this. also, i kept trying to reel hannibal in, but then i remembered that scene in the book where hannibal sulks for like a whole day because will wouldnt give him his phone number. and the time in the show when hannibal literally let himself get arrested because will rejected him and i was like "actually that's probably kinda in character."

# Chapter 13

Will sits on Hannibal's hips, his thick cock lined up behind him while Hannibal presses his fingers inside Will, and then out, slow and slick.

"Why did you say no the last time I asked you to fuck me?" Will asks, as Hannibal slips his fingers out and drizzles more lubricant on them, dipping them back in easily. Will rocks his hips, rolling them forward like he's learned he likes, allowing the catch of Hannibal's knuckle against his rim.

"I wanted you to know," Hannibal says simply. Will snorts in response, and lets his hands land lightly on Hannibal's chest, balancing himself.

"You wanted it to be *special*," Will says, almost mocking. Hannibal's eyes flash, and Will grins at him, circles his hips and grinds against Hannibal's cock.

"I wanted you to know me, before-" Hannibal almost gasps then, when Will takes his wrist and pulls his hand away from him. He lines up Hannibal's cock with his slick hole, and takes a moment, circling his hips and allowing the head to tease his rim.

He presses down slowly, breathing heavily, and allows the head of Hannibal's thick cock to sink inside before he pins Hannibal's hips down, squeezing them with his thighs. He rocks on him and uses the head of Hannibal's cock to tease his spot.

"I know you," Will agrees, then pinches the side of Hannibal's chest roughly, digging his fingertips into the sensitive flesh below his ribs hard enough to bruise, to cut the sweetness.

If anything this only seems to excite Hannibal more, and his hands come up to grip Will's hips, to drag him onto his cock, but Will crosses his ankles behind him, using the leverage to lift up on his knees easily. Hannibal tries to follow him, but Will's crossed shins lock his thighs in place and so Hannibal cannot thrust without knocking Will off.

Will is grinning now, openly smirking at Hannibal, whose face has begun to pinken with strain.

"Are you in love with me?" Will asks, and Hannibal moans aloud, a stunning display of desperation while he rocks his hips. Will doesn't acquiesce, instead he uses his free hand to tuck an errant curl, still damp from the shower behind his own ear and he leaves the other hand on Hannibal's chest, clutching his chest hair painfully.

He rides the head of Hannibal's slick cock, not allowing him to sink in any deeper. Will presses Hannibal down, grins at him, masturbates with Hannibal's cock.

"I asked you, Hannibal," Will says, and Hannibal's eyes roll in pleasure as Will says his name. Hannibal's cock is weeping now, and Will is so slick between his legs that every tiny shift of his hips is sensual and smooth.

“Oh, yes,” Hannibal says, and his eyes are fixed on the ceiling, as though he cannot bear to look at Will like this, or as if he will come if he sees him.

“Yes?”

“Yes, I love you,” Hannibal says, and his thighs are shaking. Will sinks down onto his cock in a slow, smooth press, and Hannibal says something in another language, something low and fierce tripping off his tongue as his head tips up.

“Don’t come,” Will says immediately, desperately. He’s not sure if Hannibal is going to, or not, but he doesn’t want this to end, not what he’s finally getting what he wants.

Hannibal nods, but his eyes are still turned away, so Will grabs him by the hair and forces him close.

“Look at me,” he demands.

“I’m afraid you must choose one or the other,” Hannibal says and his voice is slightly broken. Will thrills at this, this idea that Hannibal is desperate enough to tell Will that he cannot watch him ride him or it will be over too soon. Will clenches down experimentally, not to tease Hannibal, as he’s sure it must come across, but solely because it feels so electric and powerful and filling to ride Hannibal like this.

“Will, please!” Hannibal hisses and Will is abruptly so close.

“Hannibal,” Will says and Hannibal shuts his eyes and moans, a broken noise of wonderment. “How did you kill King?”

Hannibal lifts his head and drops it back down, his breath fast and shallow.

“I strangled him,” he pants.

“In front of my father?”

“I injected *him*,” Hannibal says, tossing his head. His hair is loose and shining, and Will leans over him, and plants his hands either side of Hannibal’s head. He finally uncrosses his ankles and lets his feet drop either side of Hannibal’s knees. Hannibal thrusts up as Will sinks down and he’s finally as deep as he can get. Will’s inner thighs are hot, and slick with lubricant and Hannibal’s precome. “With ketamine, and when he fell, I strangled King.”

“Did you like it?” Will wants to know. He isn’t sure why, but he has never been able to empathise with Hannibal in the same way he can with almost everyone else. He needs to ask, because Hannibal has built so many walls, has so many masks that Will cannot simply slip into his mind and see what he is.

He must *ask*, and that, more than anything else, is fascinating. Will has never had to ask, before.

“Yes,” Hannibal says and Will circles his hips, cruelly. “Not like this,” Hannibal amends.

“Tell me.”

“It’s not sexual, the kill,” Hannibal pants. “It’s… power. Absolute, artistic control.”

Will shouldn’t be, but God help him, he’s so close his cock is dripping onto Hannibal’s stomach. He speeds up, fucking himself down onto Hannibal hard and rough, taking what he wants.

“Hannibal,” Will starts, and gasps himself short when Hannibal’s cock rolls over his prostate, a smooth, deep pressure that makes his toes curl.

“Ask me,” Hannibal says, and Will tightens his fingernails into the pillow under Hannibal’s head. It is a wonderful, beautiful blessing to be so well understood. Will has never experienced it before, and he thinks, neither has Hannibal.

“Were you going to kill me?” He asks, and a faint blush rises on his chest, as though he is asking Hannibal something taboo and filthy, as if his words were rather *do you think about me to make yourself come?*

“Yes,” Hannibal says and Will rolls his hips faster. “Not anymore.”

“Do you want to kill my father?” Will asks and Hannibal rocks his hips upwards and Will stills, his body stopping just on the cusp of orgasm. For a moment, he is furious at his body’s automatic response to pleasure, which is to avoid it. His toes are curled and his mouth is open and obscene as he moans.

But Hannibal understands him, and knows what it means when his body stops, and trembles, that he is so close. And instead of stopping and checking on him like other partners have done, or slowing down, Hannibal fucks him brutally and Will *screams* and drips come onto Hannibal’s sweating stomach as he shudders, tightening on Hannibal’s cock and almost sobbing with how good it feels to clench down on something when he comes.

“Yes,” Hannibal says, dizzily, and Will understands it as a response, not a moan of pleasure when Hannibal continues. His chest is flushed and his nipples are hard and Will can see how close he is.

“But I would much rather watch you kill him,” Hannibal confesses and Will rises up. Hannibal does not grab at him, but his lips part, like he is going to say something, but Will drags on his clothes too quickly, and before Hannibal can get his bearings, Will is gone.

Will’s dogs bark when he gets home, though he has trained them better than that. He understands, and does not punish them for it. He has returned smelling strongly of another person, and sweat and his own trauma, and they are just worried. He grabs Sugar, the huge Bernese mix gently around the shoulder and pets him. The other dogs crowd him for a few minutes, but Sugar is the biggest and so they don’t push him out of the way.

They wait their turn, and when it doesn't come, because Will is quietly sobbing into Sugar's thick black fur, they wander away. Will doesn't hear his father get out of bed, but he senses when he is no longer alone in the living room, some re-awakening sense of self-preservation that stirs.

"Why are you so late?" Beau asks, and Will buries his nose into Sugar's furry collar.

"I was at Hannibal's," he said into his fluff.

"It's four o'clock in the morning," Beau says and comes forth. Will tenses and Sugar whines softly when he pulls his fur accidentally. Beau sinks down beside him, and holds Will's shoulder gently.

"What happened, baby?" Beau asks gently and Will inhales sharply. "You can tell me."

*No,* he thinks desperately, *I really can't.* But Beau is stroking Will's back and patting him, like when he was a kid, so Will gives him a half-truth.

"Hannibal said he was in love with me," He says, and Beau's gentle petting doesn't stop, so Will relaxes and sniffs and lets Beau bundle him into his arms. He is heavily aware that he shouldn't allow this, he shouldn't encourage Beau to get so close to him, but he is shaken to his core and he wants a hug from his dad, goddamnit.

"It's ok, sweetheart," Beau says, and he strokes Will's back gently. "You alright?"

Will nods shakily into his dad's shoulder. Beau smells faintly of sleep and Will's dogs, and Will's soap. He wore a long sleeve thermal to bed, and it's been washed soft and worn.

"It's ok," Beau coos, and Will sniffles, feeling pathetically young. "Did he hurt you?"

"No, Daddy, no," Will mumbles, but Beau hugs him tight. Beau grips him gently by the shoulders and eases him back to look at him, and Will realises too late what a bad idea this is. He blinks and sees himself through Beau's eyes.

He's ruffled and pink, his clothes pulled on swiftly and haphazardly, sweat still cooling on his temples. There are ferocious lovebites on his neck and chest, the clear outline of Hannibal's teeth low on his collarbone from when he took Will to bed.

His mouth is still swollen from kissing, his lips pink and chapped. Will tenses, and starts to pull back, but Beau holds him, gently.

"It's ok," he murmurs, and draws Will back into his chest. Will blinks, and for a moment it's alright. He is normal. He has come home, upset from his boyfriend's, and his dad is comforting him. The world is off-kilter, and grey and Will buries himself into his dad's strong chest.

"It's ok, baby," Beau is saying, petting Will's back. "You haven't done anything wrong."

Will blinks at this and can't manage much more than a faint, surprised 'huh?'

“You haven’t done anything wrong, baby, he hurt you,” Beau is saying and Will blinks up at him.

“No, he didn’t,” Will says, but Beau ignores him.

“I knew there was something wrong about him, I smelled it the first time he came around. Knew he was wrong, didn’t you notice? Standing right in that kitchen and he comes in talkin’ about liver and efficiency, hangin’ all over you. Freak. It’s not your fault, honey, he took advantage.”

“What?”

“Isn’t he your therapist?” Beau asks, gently. “Baby, that’s not right. He’s got a power over you, that’s not fair.”

“Fair?” Will repeats softly. He blinks as Beau’s hands come up, cupping his face much like Hannibal’s had earlier. Beau’s hands are rougher, drier, and colder. His cross tattoo is faintly visible through the thin white of his thermal and Will shakes his head.

“Took advantage,” Will says softly, and he pulls his head back, easing away from Beau. “No.”

Beau doesn’t stop moving, he is still stroking Will’s back, but his hand gains a warning heaviness when Will does not acquiesce.

“No?”

“No. He didn’t take advantage,” Will says. “He said I should get a new doctor,” he continues, though this is not strictly true. Hannibal had insinuated it, however, and that has to be good enough for Will. “I said I didn’t. I didn’t want a new doctor, I didn’t wanna have to tell anyone else about everything. Nobody else would understand.”

Beau’s hand lifts and grips the back of Will’s neck gently. Unnoticed by both of them, Sugar finally rolls himself up and lopes off, in search of better entertainment.

“He didn’t rape me,” Will says, and his stomach turns over at the warning look in Beau’s eyes, but there is a delicious irony, something bitterly enjoyable about saying this aloud, to Beau. “I let him fuck me,” he says, and Beau’s hand is hot, and starting to sweat on the back of Will’s neck.

“Don’t-” Beau starts, his voice low and dangerous.

“I let him give it to me,” Will says, with bitter relish. Beau drops his hand abruptly, pulling away from Will like he’s something disgusting. Will grins at him, and Beau looks pale, ill. Will has always, always let his dad influence the truth, decide the story of what had happened, and Will has never contradicted his views like this before, when he was younger.

There is a perverse, hot, furious power in speaking to Beau like this, making Beau shrink away from him like he is frightened of him.

“He took me to bed, right after dinner, and then I woke up and took a shower and he took me to bed again,” Will says, and he leans forward, forcing Beau back and cornering him. “An’ he *fucked* me, and I let him, an’ I *loved* it-” he is panting now with bitter, furious excitement.

Beau looks ill, and frightened and Will snarls at him. “An’ I won’t ever let anyone else ever fuck me, not except him-” and that’s as far as he gets before Beau shoves him back and slams him back-first onto the floor. But he doesn’t strangle Will, or climb on top of him, like Will is expecting.

Instead, he drives himself to his feet and looks at Will, and then he runs. He shows his back and retreats, and Will laughs hysterically with wild, acidic rejoicement as Beau runs up the stairs.

# Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

> i'm not even sure how to trigger warn for chapter 14, aside from the usual rape, non-con, incest, kidnapping. just, if you're at all sensitive to sexual violence, or control, or parental abuse, then please tread carefully. as always, please feel free to contact me and ask me to guide you around certain areas with triggers, if you need them.
>
> here is a synopsis of chapter 13, so you can skip it and not miss the plot if you wish: beau breaks into will's bedroom while he's sleeping, injects him with a sedative and knocks him out. then he ties him to the bed and attempts to undo what he sees as hannibal's brainwashing. will is traumatised and shaken, and also has a flashback of being a teenager and caught masturbating by beau. beau laid down a blanket ban then that will was not allowed to masturbate. then, beau forced will to empathise with him and see that beau was sexually excited by the idea of will masturbating, and thus he disallowed will's masturbation entirely.

Will woke in stages, blinking into consciousness. His limbs felt heavy, weighed down and secured.

“Daddy, what’s going on?” Will slurred, the blurry outline of his father moving around in a blanket of light swimming in his vision. His shoulders were aching and stiff, and for a moment he thought he had fallen asleep in a strange position.

He pulled harder, and a thick hiss came from above him as he craned his head upward to see. His wrists were tied with rope to his headboard, above his head. He tried instinctively to pull into himself, and curl his legs up. He couldn’t see underneath the blanket but he could feel the rasp of rope tied around his ankles. His feet were spread.

He blinked and saw his father tying his still ankles to either side of the footboard, then laying his blanket back over his legs gently.

“Oh, there’s my sweet boy,” Beau cooed. “There you are. How are you doing?”

“Why is… Daddy, why…” Will started and stopped, groggy and blinking hard as his surroundings swam and resolved into his bedroom.

“How did you get in here?” He asked finally, swallowing all his other questions. Beau sank into the mattress by Will’s left side, stroking his hair gently. When he moved, Will turned his head and saw the door, his simple slide lock whole and still slid across the door.

“I came in the window,” he said, rubbing his thumb over the sensitive shell of Will’s ear. Will couldn’t remember if he had shut the window before he went to bed and he clenched his fists, hot with self-hatred, his fingernails digging into his palms.

“How did... “ Will started to ask, pulling at his wrist instinctively. The ropes were too tight, tighter than they should have been and he was already beginning to lose feeling in his fingers.

“I took an idea from your therapist,” Beau said. He leaned over and kissed Will’s left inner elbow, the sensitive, smooth expanse of pale skin that held a needle mark like a volcano in snow.

“I’m not as practised,” he said, leaning down and pressing his dry lips against the mark again. “Was rougher than I meant to be.”

The kiss put Beau’s head uncomfortably close to Will’s face and Will swallowed convulsively, and turned away, saliva building up in his mouth.

“What do you mean?” He asked, and Beau looked at him, long and hard and Will ducked his chin automatically.

“I couldn’t figure it out,” Beau said, unknowingly repeating Will’s words from just a few hours before. “Who the fuck would want to frame me like that, who was in the motel room when I came back out?”

“You didn’t tell the police,” Will croaked and Beau shook his head slowly.

“That was for me to figure out. Did you ever listen to me? You don’t tell the cops anything they don’t wanna hear. Besides, I didn’t see his face. I couldn’t be sure it was him. But I told you before; I smelled him,” he said, his thumbnail catching on Will’s ear. “I couldn’t figure it out. Who would want me gone away, so much that they’d kill a kid just to try to put me back in jail.”

His hand slipped downward, resting on Will’s rib cage and Will blinked abruptly and his vision swam. His eyes felt hot and wet, and Beau petted him gently.

“Then that doctor walked in and mouthed off to me, and I was almost sure of it, boy. I saw how he looked at you, and I knew he was gonna do anything he could to take you away from me,” Beau said. Will tried to school his breathing, slow it, but hot tears dripped down his temples and betrayed him.

“I left you alone,” Beau said, his voice shaky and tight with regret. “I’m so… You’ll never even know how sorry I am that I left you alone, baby. I should have protected you. I wasn’t here, and that… thing, that animal got in and twisted you all up, got you brainwashed. Will,” Beau said and Will blinked at him in surprise. His father rarely used his name, preferring ‘baby’, or ‘boy’ if he was upset. Using his preferred name was a signal that what he was about to say was serious, and grave.

“I didn’t protect you before. I went to prison and left you alone, and that thing took advantage of that,” he said. Then, he leaned down and laid his head on Will’s chest, a gesture as

possessive as it was affectionate. Will's heartbeat echoed, swift and shallow and Beau closed his eyes to listen to it.

"I won't ever leave you alone, again," Beau whispered, a fervent promise and Will shut his eyes and sobbed.

Some time passed, in a blur of petting and murmured promises from Beau while Will cried. Eventually, his tears dried and he sniffed hard.

"Don't do this, Dad," Will said. "It can be better. I'll be good."

"It's not your fault, baby!" Beau said, so harsh that Will ducked his chin and avoided his eyes. "It's not your fault," he said, again, softer and gentler. "You remember your training when you was younger?"

Will turned his head then and swallowed bile, hard. Memories rushed up and he forced them back down, ignoring the harsh burn of acid and hatred as he repressed it again.

He kept his eyes open, focused on his wall, refusing to even blink in case he was dragged under by the swell of fear and shame that made up so much of his center.

"It's like that," Beau whispered. "I gotta train you out of it. He's got you brainwashed, and I need to break you of that. Like a bad habit, like when you was younger. Remember?"

"I remember," Will said, and Beau slipped into bed beside him, spooning him gently. Will's wrists tugged at the rope with a rasp as Beau positioned himself, and he waited for the pain, but more worryingly there was none, just a ring of numbness around his restraints.

Will knew the trailer walls were thin, so he was always quiet. Even in the shower, he bit back any noise that his mouth tried to make. The water was warm, if not hot, and Will knew he only had a few minutes before it ran out, so he pressed his fist to his mouth and bit down on it, the other stroking himself gently, curiously. Suddenly, the shower curtain was yanked back, ripping at the rings with a harsh clanging sound.

Beau stood there, still and cold as a shadow, the mildewing curtain gripping tight in his fist. Will slipped and crashed to the floor, knocking his head painfully against the tile wall. The hot water ran out just then and Will yelped as the weak spray turned icy, sharp against his skin.

He crumpled in a ball of lanky limbs and fluffy curls, shrinking away from the cold water. The situation might have been funny, if not for the deadly restraint in Beau's eyes. Will pulled himself to his knees swiftly, and turned the shower off, grabbing at the towel on the floor with one searching hand while he covered himself with the other, staring at Beau. "We don't do that," Beau said, evenly, and Will wrapped his towel around himself, covering his body from xylophone chest to knobbly knee with the bath sheet.

Beau pulled him into the bedroom by the wrist, and sat him on the mattress, while he got the first aid kit. Will dripped onto the sheets and curled up tighter into the towel, until Beau returned, sinking into the thin mattress across from him.

“Don’t do that,” Beau said, after a long pause. He didn’t look at Will’s face, instead digging through the kit for an instant ice-pack, that he broke with a swift crack. Will swallowed, his body burning up with shame and horror, and Beau pressed the ice-pack to the swell on the back of his head.

“Don’t put your hands on yourself,” Beau said. “Not under my roof.”

“I’m… I don’t. I’m sorry?” Will muttered. He tucked both fists under the towel, easing it around his shoulders and covering himself more thoroughly. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s ok. You didn’t know. But now you know. You’re not allowed to do that.”

Will shivered, though his cheeks and chest were still red with shame, and he ducked his chin.

“Baby, look at my eyes,” Beau said, and Will shook his head, staring at the plain white sheets his father preferred. Will’s mother had liked busy floral patterns best, but since her funeral Beau had been using the pale thermal sheets.

“Look at me,” Beau said. Will shook his head again.

“I’ll be good,” Will offered, clenching his fists in the towel reflexively. Beau dipped his big hand down, tucking his fingertip under Will’s chin and lifting it slowly. Will shut his eyes, his breath coming faster as his throat was exposed.

“Please don’t make me look,” he said. A droplet of water slipped from his growing curls and landed on his bare shoulder with a gentle noise and Will shivered.

“Will,” Beau said and Will swallowed reflexively and opened his eyes. “Look at me.”

With Beau’s fingertip holding his chin up, exposing his throat, Will’s eyes automatically met his as he opened them. So, he looked, and saw, and understood.

Will’s towel was wet around the shoulders and heavy, the edge almost dipping into the water in the toilet bowl as Will heaved into it. Beau patted his back gently, his large palm flat between the wings of his shoulderblades and Will coughed and gasped, almost aspirating another wave of vomit.

His ears were ringing, and Beau’s hand was hot and sweating heavy on Will’s spine and he shut his eyes and gagged. Bile burned the back of his throat and his eyes stung, hot with unshed tears.

“I’m sorry,” he gasped into the bowl, scrubbing the sweat from his forehead with the back of a shaking hand. “I won’t do it again.”

“It’s ok,” Beau said gently. “It’s just too… It’s the hardest thing I’ve ever done, baby. I need you to… to not make it harder.”

Will nodded and swallowed, as bile and sympathy and sorrow coalesced into a hot ball of shame low in his stomach where he would carry it for the next decade.

“I trained you out of that. You never did that again, not under my roof, did you?”

Will shook his head, lost in the memory of vomiting repeatedly for over an hour while Beau petted his sweating, naked back. He hadn’t. Beau’s rules had been kept, even after Will moved out and lived alone.

Even years later, masturbation remained a difficult and shameful thing that he didn’t often indulge in. Sometimes, when he touched his cock his mouth filled up with saliva and he would gag. But he had figured out a way around Beau’s training. Beau hadn’t ever said Will was not allowed to orgasm, he had only insinuated that he wasn’t allowed to touch his cock.

But not even two weeks ago, Will had laid himself out on this very bed and slipped his fingers inside and made himself come without the learned shame that so invaded him when he touched his cock.

He had figured out how to disobey.

Beau whispered, stroking Will’s ribs lovingly as he spooned him.

“I’ll train you out of this, too,” Beau promised and Will sucked his lower lip into his mouth and thought.

He would figure out how to disobey here, too.

# Chapter 15

“I’ve never loved anything like you,” Beau says into Will’s hair and Will shuts his eyes. He knows this is true. Beau has never loved anything - not even Will’s mother- with the whole, animal, possessive, obsessive intent with which he loves Will. It feels like his fault.

“I’ll protect you from him,” Beau says. “He killed that boy-”

*Thomas King* Will thinks *a man who deserves a name, at least*.

“-and he won’t hesitate to hurt you.”

*Oh, he’d at least hesitate,* Will thinks. He is so thirsty, and his hands are cold and frighteningly numb.

“Daddy, untie me,” Will whispers. “Let’s talk about this.”

“I want to, baby,” Beau says. “But I can’t, I can’t trust you yet.”

“What can I do, to make you trust me?”

“You’ve been actin’ out,” Beau speaks over Will, petting his stomach like Will hasn’t even spoken. His skin crawls with revulsion, but the small physical comfort soothes the cramping that’s begun in his stomach, so he stays silent, and torn.

“Your behaviour the past few days, it’s… it’s not like you.”

*It is,* Will thinks, but doesn’t voice. *It is exactly me.*

“What do you want?” Will asks, and regrets it as soon as the words pass his lips. Beau inhales at his throat through his nose, smelling him like a dog would.

“I want you to hurt him,” Beau says, and Will shuts his eyes. “Text him. Tell him that you don’t wanna see him anymore. That you’re gonna find a new doctor, and you don’t want him.”

“I’m-” Will starts to speak, starts to say that he can’t do that, he’s not going to, but he swallows the words back just in time. “Ok.”

Beau is surprised by this, he didn’t this Will would acquiesce so quickly. Will can feel his pleased surprise in the hitch of his breath. He slips over Will, his whole body pressing against the length of him.

Will gasps sharply, terrified, but Beau continues stretching and he takes Will’s phone from the bedside locker. Beau returns to where he was, but Will’s heart is beating so fast he can feel the blood thrumming up his veins, to his wrists and stop there, leaving his hands cold and numb. Abruptly, hot rage surges up his spine. *That was deliberate*, he thinks, but doesn’t say.

His mouth is so dry, and he can no longer ignore it. Beau unlocks Will's phone and frowns at it.

"You already have a lot of texts, and missed calls," he says gruffly. He tilts the screen toward Will, showing him the three texts and two missed calls. It might not be a lot for anyone else, but for Hannibal it's a huge display of a lack of control, and for Beau it's an infuriating tease that proves him right. Will swallows.

"What does he say?"

"Askin' about you, how are you, if you got home safe and if you're alright," Beau says, his voice low and quietly furious.

"I'm... Text him," Will says. "Tell him I don't want to see him anymore."

Beau's fingers loosen from their fierce grip on the phone and he looks at Will in pleased surprise.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah," Will says, trying to curl his fingers. They won't move. Beau is calmed by Will's apparent lack of regard, and he lifts the phone again. Will's throat clicks dryly, and he shuts his eyes for a moment to overcome his burgeoning thirst.

"What should I say? Make it sound real," Beau instructs and Will bites back a hysterical laugh.

"Say...say, 'I can't see you anymore'," Will says, and the phone buzzes slightly as Beau taps out the message. "Say 'I know it's cold, but this is where I am. It can't continue. Tell him I'm sorry, and I should have listened to him," Will says, and Beau's brows furrow slightly, but he taps out the message.

He obviously reads Will's reference as a conversation about Will finding a new doctor, and Will encourages it. Hannibal will understand, Will knows, but he doesn't know how fast he can get here, how he will get in without alerting Beau, or if Hannibal will even try.

But Will must try, and this is his best chance. So he swallows back the bile, and Beau sends the text.

"Text Alana, too," Will says and Beau looks at him. "In my phone, under Alana Bloom. She works with me. I'm supposed to lecture today at three, text her, tell her I'm sick, and ask her to cover for me. Nobody will worry then."

Beau's lids drop slightly and he looks at Will like he's pleased with him, like Will is finally obeying and making an effort. He taps out the message and then places the phone face-down on the mattress. He lays forward, half on his stomach, half on his side to Will's right, and props his head up on his hand.

"I'm proud of you, honey. Good boy," Beau says and Will shuts his hot eyes at the pitiful lurch of desperate gratification that blooms in his chest.

Will falls asleep somehow, with his limbs restrained and Beau's heavy hand petting his side like a beloved dog. When he wakes, it's brighter, the sun high in the sky and filling the room with a stuffy warmth.

The bedroom door is open. The room is empty, except for Will, and when he strains his ears he can hear soft rattling noises downstairs, both the dogs and Beau eating, the simple clink of spoon against china carrying across the barren house. His stomach flips in him, like some lumbering dragon roused and he is so hungry.

Will wakes again and the sun has moved significantly. His mouth is dry and faintly acidic and he swallows, a click in his throat. Beau slips into the room, his lumbering bulk surprisingly smooth as he joins Will. Blessedly, he is holding a water bottle and Will almost moans when he opens it and slips a straw into Will's mouth. He sucks the water down desperately and Beau pinches the straw. He gasps in betrayal, but Beau is smiling fondly at him. "Slowly," he says. "You'll make yourself sick."

Will drinks his next mouthful much more slowly, sipping though desperation is dry in his throat. He can almost feel his cells rejoice as he floods his empty stomach with water. He feels so much better with the cool liquid that he drags it out, letting the water slip over his dry, cracked tongue and re-hydrating him wonderfully.

"Dad, I'm hungry," Will says when Beau slips the straw away and Beau chases a stray droplet of water with his thumb.

"Oh, I know," Beau says and Will waits. When nothing more comes forth he makes the effort to look his dad in the eyes, because he knows that pleases him.

"Daddy," he says. "Can I have something to eat?"

"No, honey," Beau says and his voice is not cruel, or cold. It is simply stated, as though it is an immutable fact of the universe; that Will is hungry, but Beau does not want him to eat, so he will not eat.

Will drifts again, caught in an endless tide of daydreaming and dozing. The room is starting to darken and Will lets his eyes slip shut because the rise of the moon is terrifying. When he opens his eyes again it is dark, and Hannibal is still not here. It's been almost a full day, at least five hours alone since Beau sent the texts, and Hannibal has not come for him.

Will's hands want to clench, but he can't make them move, so he settles for chewing on his lip. Has Hannibal not understood the message? Had he read it, and not picked up on the references to his own words, standing in his freezing garden, and their conversation in the shower after? It hurts like little else, but Will knows this isn't true.

Hannibal is not one to take words only at their face meaning, he would have understood Will's message as clearly as if Will had it spelled out on the sky. He has chosen not to come. Will's eyes burn but he blinks away tears, and focuses instead on stretching his calf muscles. He tenses them, and relaxes them, forcing them to wake up, and the blood to flow. He can't do much for his hands, not with them elevated above his heart, but he can keep his legs awake at least. He will need them.

There is a noise that stirs Will awake, and he almost bolts upright in bed but the ropes burn at his wrists and ankles and his hisses in pain. The back door has been opened. *Hannibal?* Will thinks, but then he hears the patter of paws on his deck and he slumps back in disappointment. Beau is letting the dogs out. Will is too hungry to fall back to sleep then, so he waits instead. Beau comes up the stairs after a while, and Will is hit with a memory of some horror movie where a monster taps slowly up a staircase and inexorably creeps after a victim.

The heavy patting of his work boots comes up the hall and Beau lets himself into Will's bedroom. He looks over Will and then sits beside him. He rubs his thumb over Will's knee and Will ignores the automatic instinct to retreat and hide his exposed joint. Instead, he presses into Beau's hand and Beau blinks up at him in surprise.

"Daddy," Will says. "I'm so hungry."

"I know," Beau says, his voice low and agreeable, almost attractive. He doesn't move though, and Will won't beg, not for this, so he sits in silence while Beau pets his knee.

"Dad," Will says, and Beau looks at him, a rising coldness in his face. He expects Will to ask him for food again, so Will looks into his face instead.

"Can I have a hug?"

"Oh, honey," Beau says, and stands so he can move up the bed. He lifts Will's shoulders gently, tucking his wide palms under his back. Beau's hug hurts with how tightly he squeezes Will, but Will doesn't mind. Not now. Beau has a habit of laying his chin on Will's head when he holds him, and even as he sinks to the side to squeeze him tighter, he does it now. The scratch of hard stubble rakes his curls, turning them to frizz and Will opens his eyes and sees Beau's throat in front of his face.

He flexes his shoulders lightly, letting Beau press him into the mattress, and tuck Will's face into his chest. Then, when Beau adjusts his chin, Will angles upward, and snaps his teeth onto Beau's throat.

Blood pours out of Beau before words do, but Will has a good thick chunk of throat between his teeth, and he rips his head sideways, tearing the flesh loose with a sound that is not unlike wet velcro. Beau is screaming, and Will fills his mouth with blood and drinks it, but he spits Beau's stubble-covered skin aside.

The flesh was rubbery, raw and still-warm in his mouth so Will licks the blood from his lips, and watches Beau drag himself upwards, roaring like a downed bull as he stumbles away from the bed. There is a creaking at the window, and Will turns to it. Beau stops his roaring in the bathroom, probably putting pressure on his wound.

"Oh, well done," Hannibal says as he slips in through Will's window.

"I knew you would," he says as he dips to untie Will's bonds. There is a repeat of the sound of Beau's work boots, horrifying on the stairs, but in reverse as he runs.

Hannibal lifts Will to his feet and Will can stand on his own thanks to his repetitive exercises, even if he cannot use his hands yet.

“You waited,” Will croaks. The blood is drying on his lips and cracking at the corners of his mouth.

“Of course,” Hannibal says, sincerely. “You had to do it yourself.”

“He’s not dead,” Will pointed out as Hannibal helps him down the stairs. “I thought… I thought you would kill him, I thought you would-” He wants to say *rescue me* but the phrase feels wrong and disgusting, even in his own mind. He cannot imagine voicing it.

“You would resent me for it,” Hannibal says, as he opens the front door, and Will knows it is true, so he doesn’t speak. Will’s car is gone, so Hannibal readjusts Will’s arm around his shoulders, and grips him tightly about the waist for the walk to his hidden Bentley.

Hannibal bundles Will into the passenger seat, and Will pulls down the visor and looks in the mirror at his own reflection. He is pale, but pink high in the cheeks from exertion.

Blood has collected under his chin and down to his collarbones, but it is most wild and concentrated around his mouth. His pupils are wide and wild, and he looks dangerous and powerful.

Will looks at himself, and for the first time in his life, he thinks he looks beautiful.

# Chapter 16

Once Will is safely ensconced in the car, Hannibal returns to the house and packs a small bag of essentials. He feeds the dogs, and puts enough water out for them that they will not have to worry about them until the morning.

He picks up Will's phone, finally, from the bedside table, and takes a moment to look over the bedroom. The sheets are mussed, and sweaty, the ropes have been abandoned on the mattress. Beau Graham's blood sprayed a pleasing pattern over Will's face, leaving one outline of negative space on the pillow. He shuts the window, and rejoins Will.

Will curls his bare toes into the plush carpet of the Bentley as it purrs along back roads, and he looks over at Hannibal, almost lazily. The feeling has returned to his hands but they are still alarmingly pale, and faintly trembling.

Hannibal had said that they would feel better soon, but when the blood starts to return to his extremities he understands that he and Hannibal have very different understandings of 'better'. It feels like fire, and needles prickling up his fingers, and bamboo splinters shoved under his nails, and he needs a distraction.

"I'm so hungry," he says, and Hannibal reaches over and for an absurd moment Will thinks he's trying to hold his hand. But Hannibal reaches in front of him, and flips open the glovebox.

There's a packet of homemade, vacuum-sealed jerky in there, and a packet of wet wipes and Will takes both out gratefully. He opens the jerky with his teeth while he peels the packet of wet wipes. He stuffs one long strip of beautifully seasoned meat into his mouth and then pulls out a wipe and uses it to start cleaning the dried blood from his face.

"What else would you like to eat?" Hannibal asks, and Will slows his chewing for a moment and thinks. The whole world seems open to him, and so he says "McDonalds" just to see the look Hannibal gives him.

"No, but… A grilled cheese," he says, swallowing his mouthful of jerky. He imagines the buttery crispness of toasted bread giving way to soft, warm cheese and almost drools. His stomach is violent in its rumbling and he looks at Hannibal, tests him.

"And lamb rack. You cooked one once for me, some kind of cherry thing," Will says.

"A rack of lamb, glazed with Merlot and served with a cherry reduction," Hannibal agrees. "Served with roasted baby potatoes, crisped with sea salt. I could make it for you, if you would like."

"Really?" Will asks, and he dips his fingers in the bag for more jerky only to scrape seasoning from the seal. It is empty. He eats the seasoning that clings to his cold fingertips,

instead.

“Really,” Hannibal says. “I could make you the sandwich to eat while the lamb roasts. I have the ingredients in my pantry, already. It would only take a few minutes for the sandwich, and perhaps an hour for the lamb rack. If you would like.”

“I shouldn’t ask you to do that,” Will says, dourly. He puts the empty jerky bag on the floor. Hannibal looks at it.

“I’ll get it on the way out! I don’t have pockets!” He says and Hannibal makes the face he makes when he wants to roll his eyes but is far too mature and distinguished a gentleman to do so.

“You may *ask* me whatever you like,” Hannibal says, changing the subject. “It doesn’t mean I will always give it to you, but there is no rule, you are allowed and encouraged to speak to me however you see fit. I will respond appropriately.”

Will’s brain is a fickle thing, and he is realizing now that he is high on exhilaration, endorphins pumping through his body as a response to what has happened. But he cannot discount how wonderful he feels at this moment, even if his toes and fingers still burn. He is aware it is just chemicals from the almost-kill that are making him feel so good, but Will has more than stood his ground to his father today, he has *taken* ground from him, run him out of the house bleeding and shamed. He realises this - and because the brain in general (and Will’s, in particular) is such a wondrous, confusing thing that seeks delight in the banal, Hannibal’s voice saying “*give it to you*” is being played repeatedly in his mind. It is absurdly arousing. Will blinks to clear his vision.

“Will you cook me the food I want?” He asks, instead of asking for what he would really like, because he is still hungry, and Hannibal has said all Will needs to do is ask.

“Yes,” Hannibal says, and this does nothing to relieve the slow, pleasant heat in Will’s groin that remembers how Hannibal said “*Oh, yes, I love you,*” in bed. There is a small part of Will’s mind that knows intimately exactly how Hannibal sounds when he says “*yes, oh, yes,*” and that part may never be brought to light, but it is treasured.

“I forgive you for not rescuing me,” Will says, and Hannibal’s mouth twitches in amusement.

“As you would condemn me for rescuing you,” he points out and Will shrugs.

“Yes, except-” he lifts his hands, extends them in front of him and stretches forward. The car is roomy enough to allow him to begin to loosen the tension in his shoulders, and the locked muscles in his hands. “This way, I don’t feel like a victim. I feel…” He rolls his head lazily, allowing his neck to relax, and Hannibal watches him carefully.

“Calm? Powerful, and yet at ease?” Hannibal offers and Will looks at him. He lifts one shoulder minutely in response. “It is how I always feel, after.”

“I am not ‘after’,” Will points out. “I am very much ‘during’.”

“For now,” Hannibal says. “Will your father follow you to my house?”

“Oh, no,” Will says before he even has to think about it. “Oh, no. He wouldn’t encroach on another predator’s territory, he’d wait till I was clear, try to grab me somewhere neutral.”

“Does your father see me as a predator?” Hannibal asks, and he sounds pleased by this.

“He does,” Will says.

“Do you?”

“The word ‘predator’ really… indicates a binary of living. Predator, or prey. I don’t want to live in a binary, Hannibal.”

“You have time,” Hannibal says. “We will go to my house, and you will recuperate. We will board the dogs, perhaps. And then, you can seek to do whatever it is you want, on your own terms.”

“How do you feel, now?” Hannibal asks, when they come close to Hannibal’s side of town. Another ten minutes or so, and they’ll be at home. Will stretches again, as much as he can, and he considers asking Hannibal for a massage in the evening.

“Untethered,” Will mumbles, and he is surprised by the gentle land of Hannibal’s hand on his knee. Will mutters under his breath, and Hannibal tilts his head slightly.

“What is wrong?” He asks, and Will does not want to say the word *aroused* in a sentence while he sits barefoot in Hannibal’s Bentley, smelling of blood and sweat, so instead he snorts.

“Well, when a man and another man love each other very much-” he says and Hannibal looks at him sidelong, and Will swallows dryly, the joke catching in his throat.

Oh.

“I did not realise,” Hannibal says, and Will would like to make another birds and the bees joke, but his mouth is dry and his stomach is doing pleasant little flips, and he would very much like not to ruin this. He will have to spell it out, because Hannibal is perhaps the dumbest person, if he has not realised, yet.

“I love you,” Will says, and the words feel minute, and vast, an endless display of everything else he cannot voice. It is far too much, and yet not nearly enough, and so Will bites on his tongue to stop himself from mumbling nonsense.

“Oh,” Hannibal says, and the sound, and shape of Hannibal’s mouth as he speaks drip a pleasant honey warmth down his spine. “And I you,” Hannibal says and Will shifts his hips. His body has been denied for far too long, and he is hungry, and thirsty, and aroused, and his

muscles are sore. He would like to eat a burger, and fries, and rack of lamb, and soup, and take a shower, and have Hannibal rub his sore back, and suck Hannibal's cock, but most urgently-

"I have to pee," he says, and Hannibal sighs, and pulls over, and watches Will escape off the roadside, and duck behind a tree. He picks up the empty jerky bag while he's waiting - because Will apparently could not wait the five minutes it would take to get to Hannibal's house and use the proper facilities - and puts it in the miniature trashcan underneath the front seat.

"Well," Will says as he rejoins Hannibal, and buckles himself in. His bare feet are smeared with grass and they leave green smudges on the carpet. "You can't say I'm not entertaining, at the very least," he says, and Hannibal indicates to rejoin the road, even though it is empty.

"No, dear. No one could say that."

Hannibal's house feels warm, clean, and safe when they get to it. Will slows in the foyer, and Hannibal puts a pair of slippers at his feet, slightly indented in the middle. He is giving Will his own slippers to keep his feet warm on the cold tile. Hannibal is absurd, and endlessly ridiculous. Will feels an almost ironic, ridiculous affection for him.

Hannibal makes him a grilled cheese when they get back, and Will should probably go brush his teeth, and wash, but Hannibal keeps carefully cutting little chunks of cheese and bread to 'test the freshness', and then turning his back, so Will keeps eating them. Hannibal makes the sandwich with freshly baked bread, Gruyére, cheddar, and some kind of thick, golden butter.

It's amazing, and it burns his fingers because he can't put it down long enough to let it cool. Hannibal busies himself in the kitchen and kindly ignores the mess Will is making against his counter top while he seasons the lamb rack.

"God," Will moans aloud, as he reaches the exact center of the sandwich, biting into the toasted, crispy bread. It gives way to soft, salty warm cheese and butter, just as he had imagined.

"Thank you," he says, through a mouthful of bread and Hannibal turns from where he is searing the meat.

"You can thank me by chewing with your mouth closed," he says, and rests a thumb affectionately on Will's lower lip. Will grins at him, with his mouth closed, and Hannibal's cheeks turn a very faint pink, quite high up, so delicate and subtle Will might not notice were he not so close.

"Oh, Will," Hannibal breathes out, a wealth of release in his tone, and Will inhales and squirms, leaning into Hannibal's hand.

"Hannibal," Will starts, but Hannibal eases away from him, and Will would feel rejected if it weren't for the visible pain the action causes him.

“Eat your food,” Hannibal says gently, and returns to the sizzling pan, and Will drops his hand and presses it to his cock briefly, to subdue himself.

# Chapter 17

After they eat, Hannibal sends Will upstairs to shower and dress. Will scoops his cell from the bag of essentials Hannibal packed and waits until he gets upstairs to make the call. When it connects to Jack, his voice is gruff, as though Will has woken him from sleep.

“Jack, it’s Will. Listen, I uh… I’m gonna need some time. I need leave.”

“Leave?” Jack says, and there’s a faint rustling, as though Jack is sitting up in bed. “What the hell does that mean, leave?”

“It means leave, Jack, I need some time off. I gotta… I gotta sort some stuff out,” Will says, and then pulls out the big guns and adds, “With my dad.”

“Oh,” Jack says, and there’s a stripping noise, like Jack has thrown his sheets off the bed and sat up. “It’s midnight, Graham, what the hell are you doing calling me and talking about you need leave?”

“Christ, Jack,” Will says, and swallows the petulance that wants to come into his tone. “Look, I just need some time away, to figure out what I’m gonna do with my dad.”

“What are you gonna do?” Jack asks, and it’s almost suspicion in his tone, so Will tempers his reaction as much as he can, allows his voice to drop slightly, submissive.

“I’m trying to figure out how to get him an apartment, maybe in the city, but I might have to give up the house so I can afford it, and he can’t stay with me long-term, never mind everything else, he’s gotta be able to get into the city to meet with his,” Will stops then, and then relents, and adds. “Sex-offender parole officer.”

“Right,” Jack says, as though he’s embarrassed, or pitying, and Will doesn’t want either. “Look, there hasn’t been much activity lately anyway, we haven’t even needed to call you in on a consult, maybe it’ll stay like that. You just come in, teach your classes, and when there’s a case we’ll call you. Maybe that case doesn’t even come,” Jack says, as though it’s an offer that is even slightly different from what Will does now. Will grits his teeth, but lowers his voice, as though he is speaking quietly in his bedroom, so that his father can’t hear.

“I can’t, Jack,” Will says softly. “I can’t do it.”

“Will, come on, what are you saying, you just wanna step away from everything, from your job for a few months, and then come back and hope I still have a place for you? Be realistic.”

“I am being realistic,” Will says. “Which is why I’m very realistically asking for two weeks, no classes, no cases, and then I’ll come back.”

“Will-”

“It’s that, Jack, or I have a fuckin’ breakdown and I don’t ever come back to the field,” Will says, and Jack sighs heavily, and Will knows he’s won.

“Alana Bloom will be thrilled at least,” Jack said gruffly. “Ever since she found out about...your dad, she’s been bugging me to tell you to up your therapy, take some time off, just go fishing for a month.”

“Hell,” Will says, then, thinking. “You know, maybe I should meet with Alana. You think she’d take me on as a patient? I know Hannibal’s not officially my therapist, but shit, maybe I do need one.”

Jack sighs heavily then, as though Will is putting a kink in his plans. “As long as it’s private,” he allows. “She’s not gonna let it happen on the FBI’s dime, because that’d mean she’d have to report on your well-being to me, and she thinks she’s too involved to do that appropriately. But she might do it personally, if you give her the puppy-eyes.”

“I’ll give her the puppy-eyes,” Will promises, and lets Jack off the phone after Jack has extracted his own awkward questing of how Will is doing.

When Will emerges from the steamy en-suite, he finds clothes laid out on the bed. He smiles briefly, because Hannibal - in some subtle show of affection, or dominance, or both, as is his wont- has laid out clothes that clearly belong to him. They certainly aren’t from Will’s bag. He has laid out fine, thin pajama pants, and a sinfully soft charcoal sweater that both appear slightly too large for even Hannibal.

They smell of his laundry, and they feel finely made and expensive, and Will pulls on the pajama pants over his bare body, and almost grins at the soft sensation of silk on his bare legs. The sweater is warm, and slips around his neck, and off of one shoulder. Perhaps Hannibal thinks Will wouldn’t notice that Hannibal wants Will swamped in his silk and cashmere, coddled in fine fabrics. He slips his feet back into Hannibal’s slippers and rejoins him downstairs, where soft classical music decorates the lower floor.

Hannibal’s face does something subtle when Will appears, a curious blankness followed by a slight upturn of the mouth that Will recognises as Hannibal’s personal mixture of obsessive affection and arousal. Hannibal leads Will to the small table in the kitchen, the same one Will sat at leaking lubricant into his boxers, with Abel Gideon’s blood on his feet. He has placed a little tray on the table, and it holds a teapot, and tiers of pastries and candied fruits. He pours for Will as he enters, and Will looks at the table, and then back at Hannibal with a quirk of his eyebrow.

“We should talk,” Hannibal says simply, and Will doesn’t join him at the table.

“Talk?” He says, as though he has never heard the word before in his life. “Fine, we’ll *talk,*” he says, and Hannibal looks faintly amused, so he rolls his eyes petulantly and sits, and drinks his terrible tea.

“This is terrible,” he informs Hannibal, and he isn’t lying, the tea is probably some unbelievably elegant, expensive infusion, but mostly it tastes like herbs with a bitter floral aftertaste. Hannibal smiles at him then, as though he is simply thrilled that Will doesn’t like

his stupid tea. Will swallows another gulp, almost burning his tongue, because Hannibal doesn't mind that Will hates the tea. He has been getting his own way, with no one to argue with him for far too long, and Will's refusal to simply accept Hannibal's opinions as fact don't annoy him, but rather marks him as interesting.

Will sighs, because Hannibal has become easier and easier for Will to read, and it is dangerous to let himself forget he's sitting down to tea with a monster.

"So. You're the Chesapeake Ripper," Will says, then, though it hurts his chest, just to see the long, slow look of appraisal Hannibal gives him. He doesn't confirm, or deny him, but Will doesn't need him to. Will feels faintly nauseous, but he stuffs it back down.

"It's probably ironic or something that I ended up sleeping with the Ripper before catching him," Will says, dryly, because Hannibal isn't reacting.

"How long have you thought this?" Hannibal asks, and Will snorts, because Hannibal is coaching his words as though he's being careful in case Will is wearing some kind of a wire. He shrugs, and lets the sweater slip down his shoulder slightly to watch Hannibal notice, and he's gratified by the swift dart of Hannibal's attention from his face to his bare skin.

"After I woke up in the garden, we went to the shower. I imagined you cutting my stomach open, gutting me, and easing my ribcage apart and then I knew what you had done to Thomas King," Will says, and he curls his hands around the cup of tea for the warmth. His fingertips are starting to chill like he's close to a panic attack. "Then, it was just a hop, skip, and a jump to realise the man who killed King was the same man who decorated him in my classroom, and that man could only have been the Ripper, so…" Will shrugs.

"Why do you think the Ripper left the tableau in your classroom?" Hannibal presses and Will leans in, as though he is going to share a secret, or bite Hannibal's mouth, and Hannibal mirrors him, a sensual movement that allows a sussuration of silk as they move.

"I think he likes me," Will confides and almost laughs at the dry, unimpressed look Hannibal shoots him in return.

"Why?"

"Didn't you see what he left me?" Will teases. "Gideon called it a love letter. Of course, I didn't realise at the time why you kept trying to insist it was a 'confession of interest' instead, but he was right, wasn't he?"

Hannibal doesn't answer him in words, he drinks his tea and then raises an eyebrow almost minutely. Will wants to grin at him, but that is probably the wrong response to admitting your boyfriend is a serial killer. But, then, his dad is a serial rapist, so, Will allows, he probably has a pretty-fucked up learned response to being around dangerous people. Maybe that's why he went into law enforcement, then consulting for the FBI. Hannibal interrupts Will's epiphany then, nudging his chilled hand gently.

"Do you want to know why Gideon brought me here, that night?" Will offers and Hannibal's eyes flash with restrained glee. Oh, it has haunted him, Will bets, how Gideon found out

about Will's attraction before Hannibal did. Will wonders for a moment, if he can really voice it, residual embarrassment curling in his stomach.

"Tell me your design," Will says. "Tell me... how you would kill my father, and then I'll tell you why Gideon brought me here."

"Or," Hannibal says, and his head tilts slightly. "I could tell *you*-" and that's as far as he gets before Will realises and buries his head in his hands.

"Oh, my God, he *knew?*" He demands, and his voice echoes strangely from where his face is pressed against the table. "He knew you were the Ripper, that's why he brought me to you. Christ, it barely had anything to do with me, he just took me because he thought either he was the Ripper, or *you* were, and I was - what? His hostage? Your gift?"

"All of the above, I'm afraid," Hannibal said. "But what is far, far more fascinating to me, is why you *thought* Gideon took you here."

"Because," Will snaps, and takes the stupid teapot and pours more terrible tea into his cup. "Because he broke into my fucking house and watched me get myself off and watched me say your stupid fucking name, and then I *thought* that was why he was taking me to you, because he thought he was the Ripper, and you were the competition, but really, he knew you were the Ripper and he was bringing me as insurance to make sure you wouldn't kill him!"

"Perhaps we should go to bed," Hannibal says, because he's absolutely unbelievable, and just because Will just told him about getting off to thoughts of him doesn't mean Will wants to go have sex with his stupid, three-piece-suited ass.

"Perhaps you should *bite me*," Will snaps and drinks some awful tea. "Christ, what is this?"

"Chamomile, with an infusion of lavender," Hannibal says. "It's to help encourage a restful sleep. Which is what I was offering."

"Oh," Will says.

"Indeed," Hannibal said.

"I would apologise for being presumptuous, but you're a murderer, and frankly, I feel like I get to skip at least ten apologies for that," Will says, bitterly. He is very swiftly losing control.

"That might be fair," Hannibal allows, and Will is shaking, and he knows he's on the verge of hysterics.

"Let's go to bed," Hannibal urges, and Will nods quietly.

"Maybe you're right, it's been…"

"It has been a particularly trying few days," Hannibal says, and Will snorts.

"Yeah, it's been a little intense," he says dryly, his whole body is at war with itself.

“You were on the phone to Jack Crawford,” Hannibal says then, pouring Will more tea. “When I sent you to shower.”

Will nods, because he’s not wholly surprised that Hannibal eavesdropped, but that doesn’t make it much better.

“You asked for leave,” Hannibal presses, and he turns the teacup neatly, encouraging Will’s lax, cold fingers to wrap around the handle. “But you did not tell him the truth.”

“No,” Will says and Hannibal looks at him and Will swallows, convulsively. Perhaps this makes him a monster, too, but Will has spent his entire life as some kind of monster. What kind of person allows their father to rape people? Will has been putting his own survival above the lives of others for a very long time, and it is a deeply ingrained response to danger.

“I did ask for leave,” Will says. “I have two weeks. No classes, no cases, and I might start seeing Alana soon, as a therapist.”

Hannibal raises an eyebrow at this, and places the teapot gently on the potstand.

“Is there a reason you wish to visit Doctor Bloom?”

“There’s a myriad of reasons,” Will says. “One of which is that I’m sleeping with my current therapist, which is unethical, and just a little slutty, another of which is that if we are going to continue this, I think we should be relatively public, and to do that, we have to pretend I sought a different therapist as soon as personal feelings came into it.”

“Public?”

“Well. Have Jack and Alana know at least. The information will filter down from there.”

“And why, may I ask, do you feel the need to make our relationship public when previously you have sought the exact opposite?” Hannibal asks evenly, and Will places his teacup down gently, the fine bone china ringing in the warm kitchen.

“Because I have profiled the Ripper as a single man, with no personal attachments to any one person or area,” Will says. “And if Jack knows you as a man who is no longer single, he knows you as the man who no longer perfectly fits my profile. So, as long as you keep your… art the same, no more fucking love-letters-”

“Confessions of interest-”

“-Then that should help distance you from the case.”

“Help… You,” Hannibal says, and this is the closest Will has ever seen to Hannibal being speechless. “You…”

“I’m going to bed,” Will announces, because he cannot sit here and tell Hannibal honestly that he is ok with this, but nor can he tell him he is not, and the war under Will’s skin is exhausting. He blinks, and allows Hannibal to resolve in his vision, the darkness seeping back from his outlines until he remains, not quite so terrifying, but the man Will loves,

wearing a black sweater and pajama pants that match Will's own, and which probably cost more than Will's whole wardrobe. It is a far more soothing image, and Will is absolutely drained. He needs sleep now, more than anything, but Hannibal is talking.

"-if you would prefer, and in the morning I shall call and have the dogs boarded for the time being-"

"If I would prefer what?" Will interjects and Hannibal gives him a look.

"I presume you won't be going home," Hannibal says evenly. "So, I am inviting you to stay with me, for the duration of your leave, at least."

Two weeks. Hannibal wants him here for two weeks? Living in his house, eating his food, and touching his stuff?

"We'll talk more in the morning," Will says, instead of saying yes as he would like. Hannibal looks as though he wants to press him, but Will can't, right now, the day - his whole life - has been too intense and too exhausting. "I'm wrecked, ok?"

"Yes, of course," Hannibal says then, and rises. "Of course you are."

He walks with Will up the stairs, and Will worries that there will be an awkward moment where he tries to press Will into a guest room, and Will may have to say that he wants to be where Hannibal is, but there is not, Hannibal simply guides him into the master bedroom as though there is no question of where else Will would go.

"I must say," Hannibal says, as they go into the bathroom to brush their teeth. Hannibal opens a new toothbrush for him, and Will notices it is a pleasant blue that matches his eyes, and he almost rolls them at the thought of Hannibal buying this because of it. "I am charmed that we will be telling people about us."

Will spits white foam into the sink and quirks an eyebrow at Hannibal. "Really?"

"Yes," Hannibal says simply. "I think it will be very enjoyable to plan the dinner-"

"The dinner?"

"Well, yes," Hannibal says, as though he is stating the obvious. "I think a dinner party will be necessary to introduce you to my acquaintances."

"Introduce me?" Will parrots and Hannibal blinks at him.

"If you would prefer I gather them in waders and took them to the stream so they could meet you and *fish*, and not have to speak a single word to you-"

"Alright, calm down, we'll have a stupid dinner party," Will says, grumpily, even though the idea of Hannibal's high society friends in fisherman's gear is excellent. Will imagines Frederick Chilton standing crossly in his stream in a three-piece suit and thigh-high waders, and snorts. Only then does he realise he has given Hannibal exactly what he wants, and he

turns to say so, toothbrush hanging out of the corner of his mouth, but Hannibal has disappeared through the door, leaving nothing but an air of satisfaction and subtle cologne.

“Dick,” Will says, and there is a faint huff of breath from down the hall, as though Hannibal is laughing at him.

# Chapter 18

Chapter Summary

> regular trigger warnings apply, but it's relatively graphic so please tread carefully if you're sensitive to that kind of violence.

Will calls Alana the next morning, and it takes only the smallest amount of begging to get her to acquiesce to seeing him, for one session as a trial. So, Hannibal drives him to her office and drops him off without a kiss, in case Alana is looking out her window.

But he does briefly press his fingertips to his own mouth, and then touches Will's neck, as though he is placing the kiss on Will's skin neatly. He is instructed to call Hannibal immediately after the session and not to leave the building until Hannibal is there, and indeed, to not go anywhere alone at all.

Will squeezes Hannibal's knee when he gets out of the car, and Hannibal smiles at him and Will thinks *oh i love him* with the wretched kind of pain that usually only accompanies death.

Alana's office is lovely, a cool, English rose-tinted room with silver accents and soft furnishings. Not the rich red heart of Hannibal's office, it more reminds Will of a soft, exposed brain. Alana greets him with a hug, and Will pats at her shoulder awkwardly and then she encourages him to sit on the couch and joins him. He sinks into the corner of it and it is surprisingly pleasant.

"I have to say, Will, I really thought things were going well with Doctor Lecter, I'm surprised you asked to see me," Alana says, and it is not a question, so Will enjoys it. Questions are pointed, and require an answer, but statements allow for a more open field of conversation.

"They are going well," he reveals, and his skin thrills a little at the open confession. "Too well."

Alana tilts her head very slightly and a strong eyebrow lifts, and Will sucks his lower lip into his mouth.

"I thought it would be more ethical to see someone else," Will says, because Alana is the most ethical person he knows - not that that is such a huge pool of people - and he knows that by appealing to her lawful sense of morality, he can make this as easy as possible.

"Explain," she says, with more of the air of a good friend and confidante than that of a therapist, but it works, and Will turns to face her more, though he knows he is blushing still.

"I uh…" He starts, and though he has thought about this, knows this is the best plan, it is so close to the truth that it is still embarrassingly. "So, I have feelings for him?" He says, though

he doesn't know why he intones it like a question, but Alana gapes at him anyway.

"So. Uh, we agreed it wouldn't be ethical to see each other in a, uh, professional capacity," he says.

"Wow," Alana says, and Will winces.

"I know-"

"No, I mean," she says, abruptly. "It's good to see you taking active steps towards your own mental health."

He looks down at the faint pattern of the sofa, and wishes he'd worn his glasses, but they were still in his bedroom since Hannibal hadn't grabbed them.

"I'm just surprised," Alana says. "Well. Maybe not that surprised. But, you know, it's good that you were conscious enough to recognise that continuing on professionally together was a bad idea. So, uh…" She makes an expansive motion with her hands, as though she is gesturing something crude and Will thinks she's going to ask something very different than what she does.

"Are you going to see each other?"

"Yes," Will says. It isn't a lie, they *will* see each other. She hasn't asked if they *have* been seeing each other.

"Huh," Alana says, as though Will has just told her he would like to date the couch they're sitting on.

"I know you probably think it's not a good idea-"

"Actually," she interjects, and Will blinks at her. "Honestly, I think it could be really good, for both of you. You're so emphathetic, and Hannibal is so controlled, I think it could be good for you two to balance each other out. I'm just surprised, I had no idea Hannibal was even capable of something as close to scandal as dating an almost-patient."

"Yeah, well," Will says, and casts about roughly. This is much harder than he'd thought it would be. "I was never technically his patient."

"That's true," she muses. "Still. Baltimore's high-society will be absolutely thrilled."

"They won't know!" He interjects. "Christ, we'll just say we met through work, there's no need to-"

"They won't know that you were almost a patient," Alana interrupts. "I mean, whatever they read from the two of you, they will be delighted by the idea of Hannibal dating a younger man who might be a coworker. It's as close to scandal as Hannibal ever gets. So..."

"So?"

“So, he must think you’re really something special,” Alana says, with a gentle twinkle in her eye and Will curls up on the couch, feeling almost absurdly welcomed.

“Does Jack know?” She asks then, and Will winces.

“Not yet,” he says evasively and she raises an eyebrow.

“You know he called me to tell me you asked for leave, right?”

“Uh, no. I didn’t know that,” He says, and purses his lips.

“Well, he did. And Will… I have to say, I’ve never seen you act like this. Seeking out a therapist on your own initiative? Taking a mental health break from work? Honestly, I’m really proud. Hannibal is clearly a good influence on you,” she says and Will laughs aloud.

“Do you want to tell me about your father?” Alana asks, then and Will wants to say no, but if he’s here in part to help bolster Hannibal’s alibi, he might as well get some use out of it.

“What do you want to know?”

“Whatever you’d like to tell me,” she says gently, and Will chews on his lip. So, this is what it’s like to see a therapist who has no ulterior motives. It’s nice, if a little boring.

“I guess I’ve been thinking a lot about growing up,” he says evasively, but when Alana doesn’t interrupt he finds himself continuing.

“You know, don’t you?”

“I know that your father was jailed for sex crimes, and Jack told me about what happened when your father was arrested,” she says kindly.

“Right. Well. There was this one thing that he did, when I was a teenager, and I’m not entirely sure how normal it is, so…”

“Well, that’s something we can talk about,” Alana says. “I can be your impartial judge, and help you figure out what is and isn’t normal.”

“Yeah,” Will breathes. “Yeah, I guess. So, uh, I think it’s pretty normal to uh…” He can’t find the words for a moment, and is horrified that he’s even about to speak them, but the soft pinkness of Alana’s office is welcoming, and private, and it reminds Will of a brain, private and impassable, so he forces himself on.

“For parents to like, ban masturbation-”

“No,” Alana says gently, and Will starts.

“No. That’s not normal,” she says, and her voice is clear, and kind and Will is trembling a little, he realises. “Masturbation, as part of your sex life is private, and nobody has a right to tell you what you aren’t allowed to do, not even your parent. But that’s a reasonably common belief, I think, especially in religious families, that masturbation is some kind of deviant behaviour that must be corrected. But really, it’s not. Even as a teenager, you had that right to privacy.”

Will inhales then, because that doesn’t really help. He recognises that Alana is probably right, but it contradicts what he has been taught, and if Alana is reacting like this to only the start of his story, he isn’t sure how to get to what he considers the bad parts.

“Oh,” he says, stupidly, and swallows. “See, my dad, he thought it was. Not. Bad?” Will has rarely sounded so idiotic in his life, but it is immensely difficult to voice what he would like to say. Alana seems to pick up on this in his silence, and she rises, a slow, gentle movement that is calculated to be careful enough to make him not recoil.

“Maybe it would be easier to write it,” she offers then, and goes behind her desk. “Sometimes, the things that we find most difficult to say must still come out, and it can be easier to write it, as opposed to hear yourself say it aloud.” She returns then, with a hardback notepad and a ballpoint pen, and leaves them on the middle of the couch, for Will to take if he wishes.

“Is that ok?” He asks. “If I spend twenty minutes writing, is that...alright?”

“It’s fine,” she says, gently, and sits behind her desk. “Take as long as you want. Write whatever you would like. I can read it when you’re done, and we can talk about it, in this session or the next. There’s no wrong way to do this, Will.”

So, Will writes, and when his hand cramps, he flexes it and finds that Alana has left a glass of water on the small table to his right, so he drinks it. His handwriting is atrocious with how badly he is trembling, but Alana’s right, it is far easier to write things he has no words to say.

*when I was in my teens my dad caught me masturbating in the shower. he must have listened to me, because he came in and pulled the curtain down and yelled at me. he knew I had an empathy disorder, and he knews that when He made me look in his eyes that i could see what he was thinking or what he wanted, so that became a punishment, for him to make me look in his eyes and see exactly what it was he wanted to do. he told me i wasn’t ever allowed to do that under his roof and he made me look in his eyes and see why and i could see that he didnt want me to do it, not because he thought it was a sin, or wrong, but because he wanted me too badly and if i made it more difficult for him, he couldnt restrain himself and he wanted to rape me, and ive never said that. not to anyone, ive never phrased it like that, it sounds so violent and dangerous i dont think that i am allowed to say that. but i knew it was true and he knew it was true and he made me look in his eyes so i’d know i couldnt ever do that, because he was restraining himself and if i made it more difficult for him he would snap, and i dont know what he’d do. If he would keep raping boys just because they looked like me, or if he’d rape me or if he’d kill me or if He’d kill himself i dont know. I just know that i wasnt allowed to do that and i should wear big ugly clothes and i should keep my hair short and i shouldnt laugh too loudly and i shouldnt stay home too much. sometimes he’d come into my bedroom and just stand there listening or watching me to make sure i wasnt doing anything wrong and*

*i got into a habit of sleeping fully dressed, with my hands above the covers no matter how cold it was because if he saw my hands he would leave sooner. I shouldnt love my dad but i still do, but when i think about him sometimes all i can think about is the boy who killed himself after my dad hurt him or the boys who didnt do anything wrong they just had the bad luck to look like me or sometimes when its bad i just see my dad as the monster standing at the foot of my bed at night but i still love him*

When Will is finished writing, he is shaking so violently that Alana takes a soft, weighted blanket from a drawer and rests it around his shoulders. It's made for autistic people, and the pressure is grounding. He looks over what he's written with a dissonant kind of disgust. This is an outpouring of terrible things written with awful grammar in a hand that jags roughly up and down the page.

He pushes the notebook over to Alana. He drinks a second glass of water while she reads it, and he watches her expression, waiting for her judgement, for her horror and anger, but her face is calm, even as she sees the rip in the page where his pen had torn through.

He feels the urge to apologise, to say he's sorry for taking up her time, and for ruining her paper, or for making her read his half-nonsensical ramblings but he bites his tongue. And when Alana puts the notebook gently on the desk, and joins him on the couch, she looks him in the eye too, so he can see her clear, and strong, and she says:
"You didn't do anything wrong," and Will cries, then, and though there's ink on his fingers and tears smeared across his face he feels cleaner than he has in a very long time.

"Things have been hard," Alana says after his crying jag, and it's such an understatement he almost wants to laugh.

"But I think we've made really good progress today, and I have to say I think a lot of that has to do with the attitude you're bringing in. For the first time, since I've known you, you're displaying an openness that is conducive to therapy. You're doing good work, Will."

And Will knows she's right, and he has been working at this, but he also knows that he's currently in a strange limbo. His avoidance of his father can't go on forever, and maybe Hannibal is right. Maybe the only way forward is through.

He makes another appointment with Alana, and she encourages twice-weekly sessions during his leave, that can be optionally reduced to weekly sessions when he rejoins work. He takes the appointment slot, but secretly, he thinks he won't need therapy for very much longer.

# Chapter 19

Will wakes slowly, well-rested, drifting softly into wakefulness as smoothly as a warm bath. Hannibal sleeps underneath him, and Will looks up at him from where his head is pillowed on Hannibal's bare chest. His lashes are still, and blonde.

Will blows gently across his face but he is at rest and doesn't stir, so Will slips from the bed quietly into the bathroom. Hannibal's soap is a thick white bar that smells like orange oil, and lathers into luxurious bubbles. He showers slowly, taking his time beneath the hot water.

This is his first official day of leave, and Will stretches beneath the steam as he thinks of the open day ahead of him. There is a click behind him, and Hannibal lets himself into the shower, naked and confident. He takes the space at Will's back.

"It's rude not to wait for an invitation," Will said, even though the corners of his mouth curl upwards.

"Ruder not to extend one," Hannibal teases, and his voice is rough with sleep. Will wonders if he's the only person to ever see him like this, not only naked, but vulnerable with sleep. He leans backwards into Hannibal's chest even as his arms come up to wind around Will's waist and they slip together, neat and easy. Will sighs.

"Do you have work today?"

"I have two morning appointments, and three in the afternoon. My first is with Jack Crawford. I believe he wants an opinion on a past profile, perhaps to gauge me as your stand-in during your leave," Hannibal says. "But I will be home around five, to prepare dinner."

It's all horribly domestic, and Will can't bear it, so he turns to Hannibal and kisses him, to eat the sweet words from his mouth. Hannibal's fingertips, sudsy with soap, slip down his waist with sincere affection, and he has thoughtfully brushed his teeth in the en-suite before seeking Will out.

"Hannibal," Will says, though he has nothing to add. But it is a wonder to see how Hannibal's eyes slip to half-mast when he is vulnerable and sleepy like this, so Will presses him.

"Hannibal," he says again and Hannibal kisses his fingers when he touches his face. "Come back to bed," he says, and Hannibal rinses the soap from them both with an efficiency that is almost alarming, but mostly makes Will laugh.

Hannibal's hair is still damp, and Will secretly thrills at the idea that Hannibal would allow Will to take him to bed when he is unpolished like this. But then, Hannibal turns him onto his stomach and presses his naked body into the silky sheets and Will has no more coherent thought for a while.

Hannibal slicks his fingers with lubricant, and traces his fingertips so lightly around Will's hole that it tickles more than anything. Will makes a noise of irritation, and he tries to rise to his knees, to push Hannibal onto his back and take what he wants, but Hannibal has other ideas.

He plants his left hand on Will's back, shoving him onto his front and Will inhales sharply. Hannibal presses his fingers in then, two, slow but not gentle.

"No," Hannibal says and Will grunts. "Last time you tried your hardest to take control-"

"*Tried?*" Will interjects, but his teasing tone disappears when Hannibal fucks him on his slick fingers. Will gasps, and his hips come up almost of their own accord.
The silk is almost unbearable already on his cock, and he wants Hannibal to go faster, to press more fingers in, to do anything more than this slow, rough fingerfuck.

"Do you think you could have done what you did if I had not let you?" Hannibal asks, and the question is clearly rhetorical but Will finds himself moaning in response anyway. Hannibal's fingers curl down, towards Will's cock and Will swears violently. He is already between Will's thighs, but not deeply enough, apparently, because he knees Will's legs further apart, while he pins him down. Will's breathing is embarrassingly rough and quick.

"You want this," Hannibal asserts, and Will buries his face into the pillow and gasps. "You'll take what I give you," he says, and he twists his fingers cruelly, his knuckles spreading Will's clinging walls and Will cries out.

"Tell me," Hannibal says, and there is something wonderfully safe and grounding in Hannibal's voice, its low timbre and unique accent, it is so individual that it could not be anyone else in the world behind Will, and that alone is thrilling and safe. "What do you want?"

"Another finger," Will gasps then, and his voice is so shaky and desperate that he's shamed by it, and he sinks his face deep into the pillow. But Hannibal withdraws and Will makes a noise of betrayal, but when he turns to look at Hannibal, he's getting the lube again.

He takes the bottle, then and drizzles it over Will's hole obscenely and Will's cock throbs with how open and wet he feels already. Hannibal pushes three fingers in, then, and twists them, fucking Will open and stroking his spot, *playing* with him, and Will sobs even as his hips cant upwards.

"I purchased something for you," Hannibal says, and Will doesn't comprehend him for a minute. Instead, he rolls his hips, and rides Hannibal's fingers, slick and steady in him. When he doesn't answer, Hannibal smacks his ass with his other hand, and Will moans obscenely loudly, and then blinks in surprise. But when he looks back over his shoulder at Hannibal, he simply raises an eyebrow at him, so Will huffs.

"What did you get?" Will asks, though he couldn't care less. Worse then, because Hannibal is removing his fingers again and Will whines at the loss, but Hannibal is standing and-

“Are you *laughing* at me?” Will accuses, while Hannibal cleans his hand on Will’s abandoned towel.

“Laughing with you, my love,” Hannibal assures him, as he retrieves a black gift bag from the blanket box at the end of the bed.

“But I’m not laughing,” Will points out, resting on his elbows while he watches him.

“Laughter is an expression of happiness and appreciation. I’m simply appreciating you,” Hannibal says, and places the gift bag on the bed in front of Will.

“You’re laughing at me,” Will grumbles, but he opens his gift. He slips a long black box from the bag, and turns it over. Then he looks at it for a long moment.

“This is-”

“Yes,” Hannibal agrees. The box has a remote-controlled plug in it. It’s made of a silvery metal that looks smooth and cold. Will looks at it, then Hannibal, then back at it. The damn thing looks expensive. How did Hannibal find an expensive butt plug?

“Alright,” Will says, so swiftly that he surprises himself. But Hannibal simply takes the box from him and tilts his head.

“Are you sure?” He asks, and Will pushes himself up onto his knees and nods.

“Yeah, why not,” he says, and there’s a quiet tear of card as Hannibal rips the packaging to get at it. “Did you have uh, an idea in particular in mind when you bought it?”

“Many,” Hannibal says pleasantly and Will rolls his eyes. “Most pressing right now is that I would like you to wear it and go to your knees. I will, of course, hold the remote.”

“You want me to wear it while I suck your cock?” Will asks, mostly because Hannibal gets a certain look about him when he swears.

“If you must be so crude,” Hannibal sighs and Will laughs at the put-upon look on his face.

“I must,” he says, and then Hannibal tosses the plug onto the bed, and drags Will down to the end of it.

“A crude, callous, terrible boy,” Hannibal laments and Will laughs even as Hannibal turns him onto his stomach and spreads his thighs, his feet pressed against the wooden floor.

“What have I done to deserve such a boy?” Hannibal muses, and Will is so slick that the plug slides inside him with very little resistance. It is heavy, and cold, but quickly warming to his body temperature.

“It must have been something awful,” Will says as the plug slips home. He lets out a noise that can only be categorised as a squeak as the plug nestles against his prostate, pressing against it relentlessly.

“Awfully good,” Hannibal says, and Will’s response is lost as he turns the plug on. Hannibal pins him there for a moment, apparently just to watch Will squirm, pink and sweating as the plug vibrates in him. It is a low, rumbling kind of vibration, and if it had been shallow enough to avoid his prostate he probably still could come from it.

But it is almost cruelly shaped, and the way it presses into his prostate ensure it buzzes directly into his most sensitive parts. Hannibal has kneed his thighs apart to watch, and Will groans into the mattress as Hannibal presses him down, pinning him to the sheets as the plug sends wild, sharp shocks of pleasure up his spine.

“You could come like this, whenever you want,” Hannibal says, and Will almost sobs with embarrassing gratitude, but then Hannibal continues. “But, if you do, you should know I plan to fuck you anyway.”

So, Will grinds his palms into the mattress and tries to contain himself, because it’s a special, delightful kind of torture to have Hannibal fuck him after he’s come, he’s learned, but with the addition of the vibrator he is so sensitive he cannot even imagine how overwhelming it will feel for Hannibal to fuck him after it.

“God,” Will says before he even realises he has spoken, and he isn’t sure he’s ever been this hard before in his life. Hannibal’s hands press him down into the mattress, but if Will cants his hips a certain way he can feel Hannibal’s strong thigh against his ass, and higher up, his cock where it throbs. He wants it in his mouth intensely, but he can’t simply say such a thing aloud, so instead he tries to show it through his body, in the way he turns, and yields to where Hannibal pins him down.

He has a sudden blasphemous-feeling memory of the weighted blanket in Alana’s office, and though it seems coarse to compare the two, there is a similar kind of grounding, deep-pressure feeling that is soothing. Perhaps it is that, that aura of strength and protection that allows him to feel safe enough to say:

“C’mon, let me-” while he grinds back onto the plug.

“Let you?” Hannibal encourages, and he’s holding the remote, Will sees, and his thumb is rolling over and over the wheel, as though he is teasing him, as though he could turn it off at any minute, or worse, *up*.

“C’mon,” he begs, and he truly didn’t know he could ever sound this desperate. “Let me-”

“Let you what?” Hannibal says and Will’s cock is leaking onto the bedspread, but it’s far too late to do anything about it now.

“Don’t make me say it,” he pleads and Hannibal thumbs the dial, and the vibration quickens, and Will yelps.

“I’m not making you do anything,” Hannibal says reasonably, as he strokes long and slow down Will’s spine, to settle at the base of his spine possessively. “Or would you prefer I stop?”

“Oh, god, don’t *stop*,” Will says, and he must look as incredulous as he feels, because it is the worst idea he has ever heard, and Hannibal is laughing at him again.

“Then, tell me what you w-”

“Let me suck your cock,” Will relents, and he doesn’t know why it’s so much more embarrassing to say it aloud like this, but it is. His body is awash with tight shame, but his cock is hard, and leaking.

“Yes,” Hannibal says, and Will shivers, as Hannibal lifts him and swaps their places. He sinks easily to his knees on the floor beside the bed, while Hannibal sits on the edge of the mattress, and the bed is so high that he must engage his thigh muscles to remain upright enough to reach Hannibal’s cock.

When he does, he is quite sure that Hannibal has planned this, because tensing his legs to remain upright on his knees, rather than his haunches, forces him to clench around the plug, and Will almost comes there, on Hannibal’s nice shiny floor.

“How do you feel?” Hannibal checks in, and Will puts his face to Hannibal’s thigh to catch his breath for a moment.

“Good,” he breathes. “You?”

“Good,” Hannibal says, both a response and an answer. “Spread your knees slightly,” he says, and when Will does, it helps. He is no longer clenching so tightly around the plug, and it’s more bearable. Hannibal strokes his hair kindly while Will kneels there, and Will’s cock throbs.

“I love you,” he breathes into the soft skin between Hannibal’s thigh and groin. He smells clean from their shower, and warm, so Will licks him. Hannibal shivers very lightly, almost imperceptibly.
“As I love you,” Hannibal answers, and Will cannot bear it, so he sinks his mouth down onto Hannibal’s cock and sucks.

It doesn’t take long for Will’s hips to start moving instinctively, trying to ride the plug in him. He moans around Hannibal’s cock, and when he pulls back for a moment to catch his breath, he looks at Hannibal.

He is flushed lightly, his hair dry now, but undone, as his eyes are half-lidded and honest, the most sincere Will has ever seen him.

“Can you turn it up?” Will whispers, and Hannibal smirks at him, so Will rolls his eyes. But Hannibal acquiesces, and the plug gets slightly louder as its internal motor speeds up, the vibrations rolling over his prostate.

Will doesn’t want to make the noise that is building up in him, so he swallows Hannibal’s cock down again. He braces himself, one hand on Hannibal’s thigh while the other holds his cock still so Will can bob his head on it. Hannibal is leaking now, and his cock is a warm

pink, and he is breathing swiftly while Will works him. He thumbs off the plug then, and Will is relieved, and disappointed, as he drags Will up onto the bed and eases the plug out of him.

“Next time, I’ll let you take it and turn it all the way up slowly, and make you come on it,” Hannibal promises, and Will gets on his hands and knees, because he is long past shame now. Hannibal takes his place behind him. He pours more lube on Will’s hole, and it drips down between his legs, landing on the sheets, but Hannibal doesn’t seem to care.

He grabs Will’s hips for a moment, and then his hand slinks down and wraps around Will’s cock and squeezes, as though he is commiserating, which makes Will giggle.
Hannibal bites at the back of his neck then, and lets go of his cock, uses his other hand to press inside Will. Will is so sensitive from the plug, and so slick that all he can do for a moment is inhale, slow and deep.

Hannibal fills him so smoothly, thicker than the plug and the stretch is gentle, and slick. Will has to drop to his face, with his ass tilted up in the air as he grabs at his own cock, gripping tight around the base to stop himself from coming. Hannibal’s breath is heavy and damp at the base of his neck, and Will rides him as much as Hannibal fucks him. He doesn’t realise he’s speaking until his voice cracks, and when he notices he is, he turns so red that he can almost feel the heat of his blush.

“-God, God, God, God-” Will chants, and then he bites into the pillow to shut himself up. But Hannibal has no mercy, and his hand slides up Will’s sweating body to pinch at his nipples.

“Say-” Hannibal starts but he loses the rest of his sentence in Will’s hair when Will grinds back onto him.

“Will,” Hannibal says desperately, his thumb and finger pinching roughly at Will’s nipple. “Please, tell me-” but he slows his thrusts, so Will makes a high, reedy noise and gasps.

“Don’t *stop*, what are you doing, don’t *stop*-” He pants and Hannibal, blessedly, listens to him and Will buries his face in the pillow.

“Tell me you want it,” Hannibal says then, into the knob of Will’s neck, and Will is almost surprised, but then he supposed, he’s not. Hannibal has only ever wanted someone to know him, and Will knows him intimately, so he rocks back onto Hannibal’s cock and through his own embarrassment he pants into the pillow.

“-don’t stop, God, I want it, please, Hannibal, don’t stop-” he pants, and Will’s muscles seem to seize then, and he stills, and Hannibal grinds into him. Will can’t even make a noise with his orgasm, he cannot even breathe, as his climax forces him to clench down on Hannibal’s cock and feel every vein, every tiny movement inside as Hannibal’s cock twitches and spills come into him.

Will’s brain doesn’t work very well, and he’s quite sure he’s lying in the damp spot, but he can’t move yet.

“Oh, my God,” he says, and Hannibal looks at him from where he’s lying on his side.

“Yes,” Hannibal says, as though Will has said something profoundly important and intelligent.

“Oh, my God,” he agrees, his voice dipped into a faintly surprised whisper. Hannibal nods, and his chin ruffles Will’s hair gently.

“Oh my God!” Will says then, and sits up abruptly, though both his body and Hannibal start to protest. “Your appointment!”

Hannibal looks at him for a moment as though Will is speaking a different language, and then he blinks and rolls out of bed.

“Ah. Fuck,” Hannibal says, succinctly, and Will can’t help but laugh because it’s the first time he’s heard Hannibal swear outside of bed.

# Chapter 20

Chapter Summary

tw: mentions of snakes, and cannibalism.

While Hannibal dressed hurriedly and left to meet Jack, Will lounged in bed. He stretched lazily, rolling his feet and cracking his ankles loudly. With a satisfied sigh, he rolled out of bed and dressed.

In Hannibal's kitchen Will blinked at the huge pantry. Shelves and shelves of jarred produce, seasonings, rice, spices, and food that required much more than 'pop in toaster' to be edible. Will wrinkled his nose. Christ. Had the man never heard of Eggos?

Hannibal had left a spare key on the table in the hall for Will, so he could go out if he wanted to. He dressed warmly, and walked the couple blocks to a huge, open-plan supermarket, craving waffles. If he was going to be staying in Hannibal's, he was most certainly going to need snacks.

The walk was quick, and the neighbourhood was quiet so early, little more than birds and the occasional dog outside. Will passed a young woman walking a Bernese Mountain dog and he asked quickly if she'd mind if he petted him.

She smiled at him, in the polite, self-satisfied way that rich people have and nodded, so Will stroked his head softly. He huffed hot breath over Will's face and he laughed quietly, though there was a pang in his heart at how like Sugar the dog looked.

When he got to the store, he ended up yanking his scarf up high around his jaw to keep out the chill of the refrigerated air, sniffing a little. He picked up a basket, and almost immediately threw in fruit snacks, jerky, nutrition bars, and potato chips.

Just because he was staying with Hannibal didn't mean he had to eat like the man. He was swinging around the corner on the way to the freezers to grab his Eggos when he stilled suddenly, so abruptly that the woman behind him almost ran him down with her grocery cart. She was apologising to him, but Will couldn't breathe. Beau lounged at the end of the aisle, talking softly to a young shelfstacker.

Will turned, as slowly, and casually as he could, gripping his basket in front of him like a weapon. The ten steps it would take to get around the corner subtly, and hopefully not draw Beau's attention, seemed infinite, an endless distance with his heart hammering so loudly in his ears that he didn't even hear the woman with the grocery cart ask if he was ok. His steps seemed too small, as though he was shrinking with every inch.

Abruptly, Will remembered a nature documentary he had watched one night, huddled in a giant sweater on the only armchair, with Beau sitting in the open doorway of the trailer, whittling something. The documentary had followed prey animals, and Will only remembered one scene in particular.

A hognose snake slithering through dry grass, inches away from a coyote. Will remembered covering his knees with the sweater, absorbed as the snake stopped, lifted its head and scented the air, its tongue flicking back and forth swiftly. The coyote padded around a large rock that obscured the snake, and suddenly scented it. The coyote had pawed at the grass while the snake tried to escape, but its movement caught the coyote's eye.

Suddenly, the coyote pounced, slamming big, strong paws onto brittle grass either side of the snake and and nipping at it. The grass had made the driest, most brittle sound as it was crushed under the coyote, like a million tiny bird-bones breaking.

It turned over, showing its belly and collapsed. Will had thought it died of fear, and he watched it, blood dripping from its open mouth. Its strange tongue lolled out of its mouth and the coyote retreated, in search of a fresher meal.

The snake laid on its back, its belly exposed to its sky and then, as quickly as it had happened, the snake flipped back over onto its belly and slithered away, leaving nothing behind but some blood. It had tricked the coyote into thinking it was already dead, and the predator had left.

The woman with the cart reached out suddenly and grasped Will's arm, asking him loudly if he was ok, and he dropped his basket. It clanged loudly against the tile, its contents spilling across the shining floor like innards. It was so bright in here. Huge fluorescents streaking along the ceiling and illuminating everything. Nowhere to hide. Eyes burned into the back of his head, and he knew suddenly that Beau saw him.

The woman was squeezing his bicep, looking concerned and then suddenly she moved closer to him, shaking him slightly and frowning. Will shoved her automatically, and she slipped against her cart, knocking it into the shelves.

"I'm sorry," he gasped, and jumping over the spilled goods, he ran.

As he pounded the pavement, his heart slamming against his ribcage, his palms sweated so much he couldn't grip his phone. He heaved in great breaths, far too frantically for his small amount of exercise, and he ducked into an alley, and pulled his phone free.

"He's here," he said, the moment Hannibal answered, and he knew he was panicking but it didn't matter, he still couldn't get enough air into his lungs. Hannibal was saying something but Will couldn't hear him, his ears kept attuning themselves to his surroundings instead, waiting to hear the great footsteps of Beau, the dry cracking of grass playing in his head over and over again.

"I went to the store, and he was there, why? What was he doing there?" Will said, and he clenched his hand roughly, leaning over and peering out into the street. He couldn't see Beau, he couldn't see anyone, but that didn't mean Beau wasn't following him, it didn't mean Beau

wasn't coming after him, he could be moments away. Will swallowed hard, his muscles burning with the need to run.

That boy who had been speaking to Beau, he had been flirting with him. Beau had touched his arm briefly, and the boy had blushed brightly enough for Will to see, and hunched his shoulders a little, shy and pink with youth, effortlessly coy.

Will had left him.

Will hung up then, and shoved his phone into his pocket. He peered out the alley again, and swallowed his panic. The street was clear, so he ran, taking long, swift strides like he was running for his life. He had left the boy.

That boy didn't know any better. Hannibal's house was just on the corner, and Will was close, only another forty feet or so. He fumbled in his pocket as he ran, and yanked the spare key out. Beau was handsome, he always had been. He was strong, and masculine and Southern, and a lot of boys liked that.

The boy in the store had, Will could tell. He had touched his toes together and smiled shyly, and fiddled with his uniform, thrilled at the attention. Will couldn't remember his face suddenly. He had stood a young man in an obnoxiously coloured blue vest and black pants, but as Will thought of him he couldn't remember if he had brown hair, or dark blonde, or if he was tall, or short, or slim, and did it even matter? He wasn't unique.

He was interchangeable. If he hadn't been a short brunette with dark curls, then there would be another boy Beau had used who had been. It didn't matter who the boy was. Ten feet from Hannibal's gates now. The boy wasn't unique, it didn't matter if he worked his job after college to pay his rent, or if he was hoping to become manager, or if he was an artist at heart, none of it mattered to Beau, because he was more than common, he was temporary, he was disposable. Will stopped, abruptly, just feet from Hannibal's gate, and his heart pounded so hard in his chest it sounded like heavy workboots running behind him, thumping against concrete, like heart muscle against bone.

Disposable. They all were. They were useful only for a few minutes, nothing more than throwaways, like fantasies set to crash and burn after they had been used. The harsh street swung up to meet him and Will dipped sideways, falling to his knees with his face close to Hannibal's wall, and he was vomiting before he could even lean over fully.

There was no one around, but he could feel eyes on him still, the twitching of curtains and the faint barking of some dog a few houses away. Will wiped his mouth clumsily on his sweater and abandoned the vomit-splattered scarf as a lost cause on the street. He let himself into Hannibal's house, his muscles shaking with stress as he looked behind him, waiting for the familiar hulking shadow of Beau creeping up the street. When he was inside he locked the door, and then double-checked that the lock was engaged.

He checked the back door, yanking on it firmly to make sure it was locked, and then went around the house and checked that the windows were closed. Did it even matter? Houses

were made of nothing but concrete and glass, if Beau wanted to get in, he could. A phone was ringing. It didn't matter. The house was so bright, natural sunlight streaming in through windows, so many windows. He went to the kitchen and took a knife from the knife block on the island, and then he looked around. Somewhere dark.

No windows. He let himself into the pantry, and shut the door behind him. It was so dark, so blessedly dark. But it was loud, too, and then he realised his cell phone was still ringing. With one hand holding the handle of the knife, Will answered the phone with a whisper. Hannibal was talking as soon as he pressed 'answer' and Will couldn't process his words.

"-where are-"

"They're all replaceable," he said softly and Hannibal quieted.

"What? Will, what's going on? I'm coming h-"

It was so dark in the pantry, so cool and blessedly dark. No windows here. There was no lock for the door, but if Will stayed quiet maybe nobody would even know he was in here. Abruptly he wanted to be lower to the ground, he wanted something to hide under.

"Will, where are you now-"

"They're disposable. They're all... one-use. These people. Oh my God, Hannibal, they're like... like *condoms* to him, he doesn't care, he doesn't need to know their names, all he needs is to- to destroy them, to ruin them, and then let them go. And he forgets about them the second they're out of his sight, did you know that?"

"Will, I'll just be a few minutes more, please try to-" His eyes were adjusting now, and the pantry wasn't as dark and safe as he would have liked. There was a smell, a low, dry smell of rice and pepper, and there was a strip of light in the floor. Will turned his head back and forth, watching the strip of light adjust slightly.

"Did you realise he doesn't even understand what he does?" Will whispers, crouching to look at the strip. The knife was heavy and sweat-soaked in his hand, so he laid it on the floor to touch the light. "He forgets they even exist when he's done with them. They're not people, they're nothing. They go out and try to live their lives, and he doesn't even know that they have to live, afterwards." There were curious, minuscule divots in the floor, like indented handles.

He pressed one, and the door - for that's what it was - swung inwards, with an almost silent whoosh of hydraulics. The sudden light after so much darkness burned his eyes, so he shut them tightly and picked up the knife by feel. Hannibal was still talking, but when Will squinted he could see a stairs, neat steps leading downwards. Nobody would ever know it was there.

It had no windows.

He dipped, and let his phone drop from beside his head as he climbed down the stairs. There was a smooth, silver metal handle embedded in the trapdoor above him, and he pushed it,

closing up the trapdoor after himself. It was so quiet down here, and it was bright, but that was ok, because it was only bright from the white strips lighting. No windows. Nobody would find this, not if they looked for a long time.

Will crept down the stairs, into a well-lit, white-tiled room that reminded him of Hannibal's en-suite bathroom. There was a stainless steel table on wheels in the middle of the room, and a small countertop with a wall of tools above it, and a large table-mounted saw on the edge of it. Two huge freezers dominated the back wall, and they made such an unpleasant humming sound that Will avoided them. There was a door in the back wall, but closer still was the alcove under the stairs. It was the darkest, smallest part of the room, a tiny dip that was shadowed and close, and safe. Will crept in there, and curled up.

He remembered the end of the documentary now. The coyote had crept up again, following the scent of the hognose along a cliff. The dry grass had rustled under the coyote's big paws, and it crept up until it stood over the snake, hot damp breath on the back of the snake's neck. The snake had reared back suddenly, flattening out its neck and hissing, and then it struck, once, twice, mimicking a cobra. The coyote scrambled back in shock at the unexpected attack. It fell from the cliff, still clawing at rock as it rained onto its sinking body.

Hannibal was tugging his arm, pulling him out of the alcove and Will hissed at him, yanking his arm back and crawling back inside.

"It's alright, don't - Will, what are you doing down here?" Hannibal had asked, and his voice was shaken, his hair undone.

"Hiding," Will whispered, and Hannibal crawled into the alcove with him. He pressed in behind Will, and wrapped his arms around, like he was swaddling him. Hannibal was trembling behind him, the fine vibrations were tickling Will's back. He was breathing fast, like he had run a lot.

"Why was he there?" Hannibal whispered, and Will leaned back into him, relieved that Hannibal was respecting the quiet darkness of the alcove.

"He's… prowling," Will sighed, and the word felt accurate. Hannibal stroked his curls back from his sweating forehead, and he was still shaking, a gentle shudder that trembled Will.

"You're eating them," Will whispered and Hannibal flinched behind him.

"I never intended you to know," Hannibal said.

"I know about the rest," Will murmured. "Why wouldn't you tell me this part? Did you think this was worse, that consuming them is worse than killing them? Did you think I would think it was?"

"I don't know," Hannibal said, and exhaled, one long shaky breath onto the back of Will's neck. "You know more of me than anyone ever has. I did not ever expect you to realise this part."

“But you’re using them,” Will said, and let his head drift to the side, his forehead resting against the cool, dark wall. “You’re not disposing of them. You’re making them into something.”

Hannibal stilled behind him, and gently he began to rock them both, cradling Will to his chest. Then, he told him a story of hunger, and cold, and a thin-boned, blonde little girl named Mischa, and the gnawing agony of starvation, and a milk tooth resting in the gentle wooden curve of a soup spoon. He didn’t stop, and his voice poured like tar down Will’s neck.

He told him about a Soviet orphanage, and silence, and a gnawing, bestial hunger, and knobbly knees, with wrists thin and delicate as twigs, with bruises wrapped around them. His voice was so low that Will almost had to strain to hear it, and his accent was thicker, more drawling than he usually ever let it become, and the curls on the back of Will’s head were damp with Hannibal’s tears.

“You know, now,” Hannibal said, when he was done. Will leaned back against him, and swallowed bile back, once, twice.

“I’ll tell you,” he whispered, and he told Hannibal of the black bile inside of him, the smoky tar that bled through him. And Hannibal listened, and he didn’t judge, as he had promised once, and Will said, again, and again, and again, with his breath coming slower, calmer, every time:

“I want to kill him. I want to eat him.”

# Chapter 21

Jack doesn't call before he arrives and Will's pretty sure he's the only one in the room who can see how Hannibal's face tightens in disapproval. But he's genial, and welcoming, and he effortlessly makes Jack feel at home as he ushers him past the foyer and into the kitchen. Will waits there, his arms finely coated in flour, wrist-deep in a sticky dough.

For a moment, Will can see the faint pleasure in the tilt of Hannibal's wrist as he gestures at Will, and gives a put-upon sigh.

"I've been trying to teach him the finer points of baking, but I fear I am not nearly a good enough teacher," Hannibal says, and Will can see the approval in his face at the innocent picture Will makes as he kneads the dough slowly. Just to emphasise his own helplessness, the aura of irreproachability they are cultivating, he sticks his tongue out at Hannibal, quick as a flash.

"I'm afraid this isn't a social call," Jack says, and Will rolls the dough into a ball. "Well," Jack amends then, looking at Will's sticky hands. "Not entirely."

"Should I be here for this?" Will asks, and Hannibal moves forward, to give Will a towel from the sink but Jack shakes his head, not a dismissal, but a gesture of faint disbelief.

"Yes. This concerns you," Jack says, and Will turns his back, washing his hands slowly.

"Is it my dad?" He mumbles into the sink, and Hannibal softens, very obviously, behind him in a gesture of protectiveness, and disappointment. It has the necessary effect, Jack's fingers twitch and he flushes slightly.

"No, Christ, Will, no. Sorry. I should have lead with that."

"It's ok," Will allows as he dries his hands. "He hasn't done anything?"

"Nothing to be brought in for," Jack says, and Will nods slowly. "This isn't about him. This is about the conversation I had with Doctor Bloom this morning."

"Oh," Will says, and tosses the damp towel onto the counter behind him. He folds his arms across his chest. "And?"

"Well," Jack says evasively. "She said you've been visiting her for therapy now, and it's going well. So, that's good."

"Yuh-huh," Will says, his jaw tight. "And?"

Hannibal is folding the towel Will tossed, and placing it neatly on the countertop. He sighs faintly, and Will notices a small cloud of flour puff up from the marble.

“Well. Is there a reason you haven’t continued your sessions with Doctor Lecter?” Jack pushes, and Will scowls.

“Yes,” he says, and doesn’t continue, even though Jack is started to look exasperated.

“Don’t push me, Will,” he warns and Will throws his hands up, and makes a face. Jack frowns at him in return.

“You know, in the time I’ve known you,” Jack says, addressing himself to Hannibal now, and ignoring Will as though he is a misbehaving child. “I have never known you to be late for anything, especially not an appointment.”

“I gave you my apologies for that,” Hannibal says, guardedly, and Jack watches him.

“It’s not about apologising, I’m just saying. It never happened before. And it got me thinking. You know your dad called my office looking for you? Said you hadn’t been home in a few days.”

*Oh that bastard* Will thinks before he can school his expression. Unexpected, but fixable.

“It’s not good for us to be in the same house,” Will says. “We clash a lot.”

Jack winces slightly, as though he’s embarrassed at himself for bringing it up.

“So, you’ve been staying here?” He says then, roughly, as though he’s pushing through his embarrassment.

“Yeah,” Will says, and bites back the *obviously*.

Jack crosses his arms over his chest then, leaning back slightly against the counter and looks at Will. There was a still, embarrassed kind of silence, as Jack stared Will down, and then visibly relented.

“Were you ever gonna tell me you’re dating your mandatory therapist?”

“Will is no longer my patient,” Hannibal says smoothly, sliding in between them subtly.

“Well, he still needs psych eval to go back into the field, and clearly you can no longer provide that! Not to mention Alana Bloom won’t, she completely refuses to supply info on you to anyone, not even-” Jack blusters.

“I understand your frustration,” Hannibal cut in. “That is precisely the reason Will is planning on visiting an old friend of mine. Doctor Bedelia du Maurier.”

Will blinks at Hannibal. He is too conscious to outright frown, not in front of Jack, but Hannibal catches his look of confusion and dips his head in a slight comforting nod.

“She is willing to, essentially, replace me in Will’s evaluations, she will report to you directly, and maintain… conversations,” Hannibal says, with a light emphasis on the under-the-table

nature of Jack's demands. Jack senses he is outmanoeuvred and frowns, rubbing at the bridge of his nose roughly.

"A courtesy call wouldn't have gone astray, Doctor," Jack bites out, and Hannibal appears to relent.

"My apologies," he says, and it sounds almost hilariously insincere to Will, but Jack doesn't seem to notice.

"Is t-"

"My relationship with Will is not up for discussion," Hannibal says firmly, and Will chews on his lip to that he won't grin. How embarrassing, and delightful it is to be stood up for like this. Hannibal watches Jack, and Jack eventually averts his eyes, with a faint sigh. Hannibal crosses the kitchen and pulls a wine glass from the shelf underneath the island, and tips it in Jack's direction.

Jack shakes his head, and takes the small hint, bustling out into the hall and taking his coat from the stand himself. He drags it on roughly, as Will and Hannibal follow him into the foyer, Will looking irritated, and Hannibal faintly apologetic.

"I'm just saying," Jack says at the door, mostly to Will. "You could have let me know."

"I didn't realise I needed to declare my relationships to the FBI," Will says, dryly. "Let me know if I have to fill out some forms about my friends too, huh? You wanna run a background check on my exes?"

"Quit it, Will, you know what I mean. Jesus, just-let me know this kind of stuff," Jack says, and he sounds so paternally disappointed that Will squirms.

"I'm sorry," Will says, and presses his toes firmly into the floor, clenching his socked feet against the cool tile. "I should have told you."

"Yeah," Jack says as he puts his hat on. "Let me know Doctor du Maurier's information," he says to Hannibal. "I'll figure out how we're gonna re-work this."

"Of course. Bye, now," Hannibal says smoothly, and gently closes the door in Jack's disgruntled face.

The second time Jack arrives that week, he doesn't call, but he looks so grave that even Hannibal doesn't seem offended. He removes his hat in the hall and looks long and hard at Will, and Will clenches his hands nervously, and then cups his cold fingers around his own elbows.

"What's up, Jack?" He asks, and Jack sighs.

"Your dad was brought into custody again," he says, heavily, as though he's embittered to bring Will the news. Will inhales slowly, and stares hard at the floor of Hannibal's foyer.

“A young man went to the cops, said he’d been attacked and raped by a man who matches Beau’s description. Buddy of mine called me to let me know, after I asked a couple friends to keep an eye out,” He sighs, and looks at Will with sympathy.

“They picked Beau up just off Cliftmont Avenue,” he says then, with a significant look at Hannibal. Beau had been less than twenty minutes from Will when he was arrested. Hannibal rubs his hand gently over his mouth and sighs.

“He was drunk, so they’re holding him. Kid’s saying he wants to press charges and right now they’re just waiting on the DNA test to come back, prove that it was him. If it was… he’s going back to jail, Will,” Jack says and moves forward, surprisingly gently.

“I’m sorry,” he says, and Will swallows hard, a bitter burning in the back of his eyes. “I’m sorry any of this is happening,” he says gently as he claps a strong hand onto Will’s shoulder. Will flinches automatically and Jack retreats swiftly, holding his hand behind his back as though it had burned both of them. He puts his hat back on as Hannibal opens the front door and he casts one final, saddened look at Will.

“We move forward,” Will says later that evening in the bedroom as Hannibal removes his shoes. “We just move faster than previously planned.”

“Or we could let him go back to prison, allow the system to deal with him,” Hannibal says as he places his belt atop the pile of discarded accessories on the armchair. Will snorts, and slips backward to lay out on the bed.

“He’s been to prison. It didn’t exactly rehabilitate him,” Will says, and the bed dips slightly on his left side as Hannibal sits on the edge. His fingers are warm, and gently teasing as he unbuttons Will’s jeans, slowly. “What did he do in prison, before, do you think?”

“You tell me,” Hannibal says, as he slips Will’s zipper downwards. Will lifts his hips to let Hannibal ease his jeans down his thighs and off. “You know him best.”

“I do know him,” Will says. “I know he probably found some young new boy, and promised to protect him, and love him and take care of him, and I know he probably abused him, and I know he probably got away with it. And I know that if he goes back, he’ll just find another, and then another when they get out or die. Whichever comes first.” Will stares at the ceiling, and thinks quietly as Hannibal slips into bed beside him, his warm body displacing air across the cool sheets. He tucks the silky sheets around Will’s body and pulls him in close.

“He’s not technically under arrest yet,” Will says. “They’re probably gonna hold him the 24 hours, let him dry out, see if he confesses, but they’ll have to let him go after that. DNA results won’t be back within 24 hours. They’ll let him go while they wait on his parole officer to get there, and get the wheels in motion. We can get him, then. We won’t have much time.”

“So, you are committed to seeing this through?” Hannibal asks, and his warm palm slips under the sheets to lay on Will’s vulnerable belly.

Will wants to laugh, wants to say *like you're not*, but the bile is building in the back of his throat, and so instead, he just says "yes", and Hannibal pets his ribcage lovingly.

"We should discuss the menu for the party," Hannibal says, drowsy. "In the morning. If there are any particular themes, aesthetics, menu items, or anything in particular you would like to include."

"Other than the key ingredient?" Will snorts, and he can feel Hannibal's smile beside his head.

"Other than that," Hannibal allows, and kisses him, and they go to sleep.

# Chapter 22

Chapter Notes

> the 'big blue eyes and rose lips' part came from something the lovely thesexythighsofthebatman said the other day about hugh, when we were chatting, and it totally stuck with me, so i hope she doesn't mind me stealing it.

Jack brought him to the police station in town, and the car ride was awkward and silent. Will swallowed back everything he wanted to say to Jack, miles of confessions and questions as they bounced up the bumpy road to a small, dusty little cop shop right on the edge of town.

“He’s in there,” Jack said quietly, unnecessarily.

“I know, I’m just… Catching my breath,” Will said, as though he had run the miles from Hannibal’s house to here instead of being bundled up in Jack’s big car, feeling rustled from the worn shock absorbers.

“You goin’ in as a cop or a son?” Jack asked him then and Will scrubbed a damp hand over his face roughly.

“Not a cop anymore,” he breathed.

“You and I both know you can go in with me, flash your badge and we’ll go in together as law enforcement. Or you can go in alone, flash your ID and tell them you’re his son and you wanna see him.”

“Christ, Jack, I don’t…” Will almost said he didn’t know, but then he thought for a moment and realised he did know. “I’m not gonna go in there and act like I don’t know who he is,” he said finally. Jack nodded slowly, like he had been expecting that, and Will supposed he probably had.

“You want me in there with you?” Jack asked.

“I uh…” Will pinched the loose weave of his trousers together gently and frowned. “I couldn’t ask you to do that.”

“You’re not asking, I’m offering,” Jack said. “If you want, I can go in, wait in the waiting room. If you need me, you call me and I’ll come in, simple as that.”

“That would be good,” Will said quietly. His fingernails kept catching on his seam as he worked on the tiny hole in his pants, picking away. Jack laid a wide, square hand on his anxious fingers and clasped carefully, paternally. Will swallows abruptly and Jack patted the top of his hand with reserved affection.

“It’ll be alright,” he said then, and he looked Jack long in the face. “Thanks for this, Jack. For everything.”

“It’ll be ok,” Jack said, a quiet, strong response that held a surety about it that calmed the roiling fear in Will’s belly. They opened the car doors together, and they shut right after each-other, a sharp ‘slam-slam’ that resounded in the empty parking lot.

Will left Jack hovering by a chair in the waiting room as he approached the glass window at the reception. He coughed to catch the attention of a passing cop who gave him a weary look as he approached, and for a moment Will saw himself through the cop’s eyes.

Tired purple dips underneath big blue eyes, dark demure lashes, a pink rose mouth, framed by soft, tousled hair. He swallowed hard and slipped his glasses on as the cop quirked an eyebrow at him.

“My dad got pulled in the drunk tank this morning, I need to see him,” he said, pulling his worn beanie down further, curls springing back up around his cheeks. He avoided eye contact with the cop.

“Name?”

“M-Mine or his?”

“His,” the cop said, a faintly discourteous tone to his voice. Will saw the version of himself in the cop’s mind shatter, a pretty, cute thing with trembling hands and a doll mouth. The cop flicked through papers on his desk, ignoring Will as he did now that Will had spoken aloud, made a social misstep and ruined the pretty doll fantasy.

“Beau George Graham,” he said, and the cop leaned slightly over him to peer at Jack. Will noted his badge number quietly.

“Yep,” the greying cop said, popping the ‘p’ insolently. “Got picked up this morning for matching the description on that rape case. They’re running the DNA, but the kid’s coming in for a line-up in an hour or so. We’re drying him out.”

“Can I see him?”

The cop looked at him for a moment, thick greying eyebrows lining his heavy brow like bushes atop a mountain ridge.

“I guess,” he said. “But make it quick. We gotta get ‘em all up and ready for the line-up soon.”

Beau lay sleeping on his side on the wall bench, a rolled log of dusty flannel and worn jeans. Will picked at the seam of his own jeans as he looked at him, the way his belly swelled with breath over his waistband and receded with exhale. The stale smell of harsh whiskey filled the small, concrete room until even Will wrinkled his nose.

“Dad, wake up,” Will said loudly and Beau shuddered awake.

“Will?” He asked, his breath sour with sleep and alcohol. He pulled himself upwards, a shivering mountain of man. His flannel shirt had a long, dark streak down the chest, as though he had missed his mouth while tossing back shots. His neck was badly covered with a large adhesive bandage where Will had bitten him. The glue-y edges had begun to roll backwards with sweat.

“Will,” Beau breathed softly, eyes red and heavy-lidded with alcohol. He stretched, a long, languorous movement before he realized where he was. “What the hell is this?”

“They got you again,” Will said. “This isn’t like the South up here, that boy wasn’t too scared to come to the cops.”

Beau was silent for a long moment and Will watched him, waited for the feeling of bitter accomplishment to bloom in his chest, but it didn’t. This wasn’t a success. This was nothing more than a change of scenery. He swallowed back bile as Beau rose to his feet and looked at him.

“What boy,” Beau said, flatly and the tiny hairs on Will’s arms pricked up in fear.

“Dominic Joyce,” Will said. Beau’s face didn’t change and Will cursed, a swollen, snarled noise of fury. “He works at the store near Hannibal’s house.”

Recognition finally bloomed on Beau’s features, and he sucked his teeth. “I didn’t hurt him.”

“Don’t give me that shit,” Will said and Beau shifted on his feet, a sinuous movement of muscle and mass. “I spent years pretending you didn’t hurt them, years ignoring it. I’m done with that, now.”

“Oh, you’re done, are you, boy?”

“Yeah, I’m done,” Will snarled. “I’m finished, this is the end for me.” Abruptly remembering the cameras in here, he let his shoulders drop slightly. Such a small station probably would have low-end cameras.

He would look far smaller, and weaker in comparison to Beau in any case, but having Beau stand and move was helpful. If this tape was brought as evidence, dropping some crumbs of innocence could only help. With this in mind, he continued, even pressing forward slightly into Beau’s space.

A minute aggression that might not come across on camera if he was lucky, but that was enough to trigger Beau’s reflex. He swelled up, a huge bear of a man as he swung his arms by his sides, a show of restrained rage. Will didn’t relent.

“I’m finished with this. It’s the end for me. I don’t ever want to see you again. I don’t ever want to speak to you. I want you to stay away from me. You’re not my father anymore, you are- you’re nothing more than dirt. Don’t ever call for me again. Leave me alone.”

Beau was shaking, a faint tremble of overwhelmed emotion that Will hoped translated as mute fury on camera. Will stepped back, his feet clanging off the door, the rustling at the

other side indicative of the cop finding the key.

“I hope you rot in prison,” Will said. A scraping from the other side of the door came as the cop tried to fit the key in the lock, but it was too late.

Beau dove for him, ruining his plans. He had hoped to escape quietly, leave Beau in the cell and return to Jack shaken but resolute. He would have told Jack that he was finished with Beau, that he had told him he never wanted to see him again. Then, when Beau disappeared, hopefully the drunk tank tape would surface and the cops could see Will’s motive disappear. Why would a man who had disowned his father return to kill him?

But Beau was all emotion, no practicality, and he swung at Will before he even reached him. Will’s words struck deep in him and so he gripped Will by the hair and slammed his head off the concrete floor. The metal scratching in the door became more frantic and there was yelling outside, but it was worryingly faint, as white stars and black streaks shot across his vision.

Beau reared back, pinning Will down as he held his hair, and punched him hard. His fist deflected off Will’s mouth with a meaty smack and his ring tore a long rip of flesh from his lip. The cops at the door had doubled, and Will could hear the distinctive sound of Jack’s running footsteps over the rhythmic pound of Beau’s fists into his body.

Beau wouldn’t let Will escape, and so there would be a change of plan. Bruises and blood welled at his mouth and eyes and Will curled up as much as he could, under Beau’s tight fist in his curls.

He let the burgeoning tears swell at his eyes and overflow, as the metal door started shaking in its hole, and Jack’s bellowing voice echoed around the concrete room. Beau snarled, an animalistic creak of sound as Will let his loose fist come up. Instead of hitting him, like Beau expected, Will dragged himself underneath Beau, easily hiding his face and body from the view of the camera. Once he was hidden, Beau’s hands gripped in his hair again.

Beau's knee smashed upwards, meant for the tender expanse between Will’s legs, but he shut his thighs quickly, and lifted his hand again. He surprised Beau once more, as he dragged his hand across his own mouth - not much time, the lock was turning in the door - and gathered a wet pool of blood from his lip. He reached up, and smeared his own blood over Beau’s lips just in time as the door flew up and Jack shoved his way inside.

Will let his tears fall then, a quiet whine of terror building in his throat, not entirely faked as the cops dove at Beau and restrained him. Jack dropped to his knees, a fierce expanse of strong muscle, dark skin, and tailored clothes as he eased Will over to him.

His hand was heavy and wonderfully platonic on his shoulder, and so, just for the sting of it, Will let himself fall forward into Jack’s embrace. He caught a brief look back at Beau, and memorised it, pressed his grief-stricken face into the folds of his mind like a flower in a book.

“Will?” Jack was yelling, and Will blinked up at him, his vision swimming with tears. “Is that your blood? Is that your blood on his mouth, did he bite you?”

“No,” Will said, and made sure his voice was both loud, and bitterly resigned enough to burn itself into the minds of the cops who were now frozen, observing Will’s kneeling, blood-soaked, paternal embrace with Jack as Beau looked on, panting and growling like an animal, and entirely unharmed.

“No. He kissed me,” Will said, and Beau screamed, his hot red fury filling the room.

Jack had dragged him back to the car as soon as was possible, and they sat there for a moment, a rapidly warming ice-pack pressed to Will’s mouth and cheek.

“I shouldn’t have brought you here,” Jack said then, an uneven, grave sound.

“It’s not your fault,” Will responded, his words thickened by his swelling mouth. “He’s just… he’s a monster.”

“I know,” Jack said gently. “He’s… did he really kiss you, in there?”

“Yeah,” Will said, and allowed enough shame and disgust to colour his voice that Jack dipped his head.

“Will… he’s a goddamn animal. You gotta stay away from him. You hear me? Let this be the end. Let the state put him away, and leave, and don’t ever go back to him.”

“I just… Jack…” Will mumbled.

“What is it, son?” Jack said and Will thrilled, some low-down, childish pit in him filling with pathetic joy at the word.

“I want it to end,” he said, allowing his words enough of a childish whimper that Jack’s face softened in response.

“It can, Will. Jesus. Look, you’ve still got a week and a half of leave left, why don’t you just go? You and Hannibal, huh? Take a few days off, go somewhere nobody expects anything of you, and just relax. Alright, let all this mess with Graham just wrap itself up, huh?” Jack said.

“Just… let him go to prison, and not even be there for him?” Will asked, swiping his fingertips under his eyes.

“Yes,” Jack said, firmly, but gently. “You don’t need to be there for him, anymore. He did this to himself. Let him reap the consequences.”

“Yeah,” Will mumbled, because to Jack, this was the end of the line. This could be the end of the story, Will could run now, and let the system deal with Beau. But he’d get maybe a decade, max, and then he’d be back out on the street again.

Besides, Jack forgot, or ignored the fact that Will had already done that. He had already carved out the end to his own story, he had ran, and Beau had already been to prison, and Beau had followed him anyway. He had found him. Beau didn’t respect the lines Will had been drawing between them since he was a child, he wouldn’t start now.

“You’re right, Jack. Maybe I’ll call Hannibal and we’ll go somewhere, take a vacation,” Will said. “You’re right. I’m gonna let it end.”

# Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

> sorry the updates have been kinda slow the past while, i have a sprained wrist and tonsillitis which is making writing kinda slow

“I think France,” Hannibal says, while they unload groceries onto the kitchen counters. Will’s arms are shivery with carrying the heavy bags, and he sighs with relief as they drop onto the marble.

“Uh?” Will says, elegantly, as he tries to catch a can of tomatoes rolling off the island. He misses, but it lands in Hannibal’s cupped hand anyway.

Will had never thought Hannibal would purchase any kind of pre-prepared food before, but since they had been staying together he had come to understand a fraction of the food insecurity that Hannibal dealt with on a daily basis.

“You know we’re not actually leaving, right?” Will adds, as he starts unpacking the bags. Hannibal over-buys, and over-serves, and what Will had once read as a vulgar expression of wealth, he now understands as a remaining symptom of a history of childhood malnourishment.

“It hardly matters,” Hannibal says. “We still must purchase plane tickets, not to mention familiarise you with the area we are meant to have stayed in.”

“And book a hotel,” Will reminds him, and then catches the minute, pleased expression on Hannibal’s face.

“Oh, Christ, you have a house in France?” Will says, accusingly.

“One or two,” Hannibal murmurs smugly and Will buries his face in his hands.

“You’re a nightmare,” Will says dismissively and Hannibal goes to the pantry to put away the canned food.

“In any case,” Hannibal declares as he returns. “If we want to ensure this works, we must remain indoors for the entire week, except the venture outwards to catch our quarry. Which means we must fill our stores well, and you must acquaint yourself with information on the area we are supposed to have holidayed in.”

“France is fine,” Will says distractedly, but then he catches the tilt of Hannibal’s head, the faint downturn and his hands skitter over cans and cans of food, far too much for two weeks indoors, never mind one.

He blinks and sees a small young boy with his sister, inside all winter, starving and unable to venture out. He sees blood spilled over fresh snow, and feels the gnawing emptiness of bellies, the open raw wound of guilt as he watches a small blond girl cry from hunger pangs.

When his vision resolves he sees Hannibal's back turned to him as he busies himself with unpacking another bag of groceries. He understands, with a slowly creeping finality that this will not just be his time to heal, but perhaps Hannibal's too.

They retire to the office, and Will sees that Hannibal has carefully placing a matching office chair alongside his. It upsets the aesthetic balance of the room, and this more than anything else makes Will grin at Hannibal, touched.

Hannibal looks at him so intensely that Will has to avert his eyes from the fierceness of his gaze. Hannibal suggests they charter a private jet, and he takes Will's stunned silence as invitation to continue.

Will wants to complain, but Hannibal is right. They decide that Hannibal will call in a favour from a friend, (the origins of which Will doesn't want to examine too closely) and he will be their alibi. He will fly out in an empty plane from Baltimore–Washington International, and land in L'aérodrome d'Alençon-Valframbert.

He will return to Valframbert a week later, and fly back to Baltimore, ostensibly carrying Hannibal and Will. There would be nobody other than the three people involved who will be aware that the plane is empty.

"I think it would be a good idea to invite Jack for a dinner before we leave," Will says, while Hannibal organises a journal of carefully written notes.

"Yes?" Hannibal says, as he opens a page titled 'Recipes' in his neat, clean penmenship.

"Yeah," Will says. He reaches out and places his fingers in the journal, daring Hannibal to shut the book on him, forcing his attention. "I think it would be odd if we didn't have a bon voyage thing, you know?"

Their conversation is interrupted by a loud ringing that startles Will. His pocket vibrates and he pulls it out, frowning at it. It takes a moment for the phone to register that it's no longer in pocket, and it quiets down slightly, and flashes the caller id across the screen.

Will sits still for a long moment while the phone rings in his hand before he swipes it, and lifts it to his ear. His voice is hoarse and small when he answers.

"He's out," Jack said, before anything else. His voice was a heavy, stone thing.

"How?" Will asked.

"They ran a rape kit on Joyce," Jack said. There was a faint, tinkling sound, as though Jack was idly toying with his keyring as he talked. "It came back positive for LSD. He admits to taking acid the night before the rape. Prosecution's dropping the case."

"They're just dropping it?" Will demanded, his voice sounding hollow even to him.

“They say defense is gonna have an easy time of saying the acid proves he’s an unstable, unreliable witness, saying he could have been high at the time-”

Jack kept talking, but his voice was being drowning out by a rush of blood in Will’s head. Jack’s words snaked through his brain, catching like thorns, and he tried to speak, to tell Hannibal what was happening but for a moment, his brain was overtaken with huge black letters, a low throbbing bass saying *unstable unstable unstable* again and again over the rush of blood in his ears.

The night was cold, and still as Will sat on the small balcony of the third floor. It was a particularly small, concrete and wire railing platform that extended from a guest room, and Will liked it primarily because it was around the back of the house, and wasn’t visible from anyone nearby. It was so high up, that it afforded a clear view over the trees in the next plot. The closest people in front of him lay in a shallow dip of land a quarter-mile or so away, right behind Hannibal’s house. It was this small dip of village that he watched as the moon rose.

Lights flicked on and off as he watched, small blobs of silhouettes moving behind curtains. A dog’s barking echoed in the hollow and Will suppressed the pang of loneliness.

His dogs were safe, and being cared for. Thy were boarded, which was unfortunate, and he missed them badly, but they were safe. But as he watched the village move lightly, breathing in the still night air, he understood. They weren’t safe. Nobody was. Was Beau in that village right now? He couldn’t know.

There was a quiet noise of metal runners behind him as the door slid open and Hannibal slipped out. The balcony wasn’t big enough for them both to sit, and so Hannibal stood, leaning against the railing.

“Have you finished putting this off?” He asked and Will pressed his head into his hands. His eyes throbbed with the strain of watching the village.

“Yes,” he answered.

He was prepared for the call he got the next morning, but that didn’t make it any easier to drag himself out of bed at 5am. The sheets beside him were bare and empty.

It was only as he dragged jeans on over his tired legs, his toothbrush hanging out of the corner of his mouth, that he spotted Hannibal, making his way upstairs. His hair was freshly washed and combed, and he had slipped into a dark suit, accessorised with red accents. He took the toothbrush from Will’s mouth briefly to kiss his cheek and then replaced it. He looked tired, but serene, so Will dressed hurriedly.

“Would you like me to come with you?” Hannibal asked, as though he wasn’t already dressed for it. Will nodded anyway, and they left for the scene as the sun broke the clouds.

“Should I brace myself?” Will asked when they slipped onto a narrow country laneway. There was a belt of black SUVs visible at the end of the lane already.

“It isn’t gory for the sake of shock,” Hannibal said decisively, and inclined his head slightly. “I hope you will see what I want you to see.”

Will stayed silent, the only noise in the car the rumble of tires over road, and the quiet, human breath of Hannibal. When he climbed out of the car, he slipped his glasses onto his face.

The sun was rising behind the tableau, and so for a moment all Will could see was the silhouette of a huge hoop, apparently suspended in the sky. The outline of a body within the hoop was wholly shadowed in front of the sun. He averted his gaze while his eyes adjusted and he caught sight of Jack, standing off to the side in conversation with Jimmy Price. Hannibal’s steps were light, almost carefree behind him.

“Jack,” he said, as he approached and Jack turned with a look of restrained sadness on his face.

“Will,” he said, before taking Will’s arm, high up around the bicep. “I’m sorry to do this.” He nodded his greeting to Hannibal, who gave a gentle incline of the head in response. “I’m just glad to catch you before you leave the country.”

“Yeah,” Will said, fidgeting with his sleeve.

“Would you mind taking a look? I wouldn’t ask, except… Well-”

“It’s the Ripper,” interrupted Zeller. His white coat was faintly smeared with dust around the hem.

“We don’t know that,” Jack said.

“It’s the Ripper,” Zeller insisted. “You’ll know as soon as you see the tableau.”

“Then I’ll take a look,” Will agreed. He eased his glasses off his face and slipped them into his jacket pocket.

The hoop should have swung in the breeze, but it was well anchored with fishing line. It caught the glint of sun as Will moved around it.

A young man, loose-limbed and beautiful in death knelt, suspended in the hoop. The circle itself was suspended by fishing line between two trees, distant enough from both to seem organic. The huge ring was made from some rich wood, flowers twined around it in subdued greens, pinks and blues. The man’s wrists were caught delicately above his head, wrapped around the wood and secured, drawing a long, relaxed line of body to his knees which pressed against the ring, his feet extending behind him elegantly.

It was a mark of the skill of the artist that the boy looked peaceful, beautiful, and relaxed even in such a strenuous pose. By his right hand, diagonal to his resting head, the skeleton of a bird, held together with golden wire perched on the ring.

“What kind of bird is that?” Will asked Jimmy, though he thought he knew.

“Um, we’re not sure yet,” Jimmy hedged. “We do know that the flowers are more Sweet Williams, though.”

“COD?”

“Broken neck,” Zeller supplied His pen clicked against his clipboard lightly. “Maybe he fought back, Ripper needed to subdue him quickly-”

“No, no,” Will interrupted, moving around the ring. The golden wire that tied the flowers to the dark wood glittered in the rising sun. “It didn’t matter how he died, just that he did. The bird, it’s a cockerel, right?”

Nobody replied, but he didn’t need them to, not as he circled the body. It was untouched, clean and pure, almost divine in its serenity.

“The hoop, and the cockerel, they’re associated with Ganymede,” Will said, and he could almost feel the pleasure radiate from Hannibal. “The hoop signifies his youth, his beauty, the bird-”

“A love-gift, from Zeus,” Hannibal said.

“But let’s not forget that birds signified danger for Ganymede, too,” Will argued. “He was carried away by an eagle to be raped by Zeus.”

“In some versions, the eagle was Zeus, and he raped Ganymede whilst carrying him to the heavens,” Hannibal agreed pleasantly, and Will shivered lightly.

“But he was given immortality in exchange,” Will said, Zeller and Price looked uncomfortable a few feet away. Price tucked his clipboard under his arm and looked up and right, as though examining something far away while Zeller frowned openly at Will.

“It’s the Ripper,” Will said, when Jack came close enough to overhear.

“Knew it,” Zeller said to Price, who hushed him.

“How is it the Ripper?” Jack demanded. “No surgical trophies, nothing at all taken from the body! How do you know?”

“I know,” Will said, quietly. “There’s something wrong with the body. The Ripper, he… in a way, he honours his kills by allowing them to be more. He thinks they’re pigs, but even a bad pig makes for a good meal. This one...He was less than a pig,” Will trailed off and he circled the body. From the back, he could see a small, tasteful circlet of Sweet Williams laid in the man’s curls demurely. The stem of one had been kept long, trailing over the victim’s nape, to land gently over his shoulder, the stem touching the base of his throat.

“He’s a rapist,” Will realized, and Hannibal *thrilled*, behind him, so obvious that Will flinched. “The body, it looks pure and whole, because the Ripper wouldn’t take anything from him, he’s not worth it, he’s less than a pig. The victim is a rapist.”

Jack watched him, his lips parted slightly, and Zeller and Price stood silently, carefully, as though they perched near a land mine.

“The Ripper wouldn’t take anything from him, because the meat is bad,” Will said, and Zeller whispered *knew it* under his breath as Price cringed.

“That’s what he’s doing with the surgical trophies?” Jack said. “He’s eating them?”

“He’s been eating them all along,” Will said.

“Will,” Hannibal said, his voice a careful, gentle interruption. “I worry-”

“Yes!” Jack said abruptly. “Hannibal’s right, Will, this is… Well, Christ, let’s not sugar-coat it. This is the first of the Ripper’s new sounder. The last one ended with a Goddamn *love letter* to you.”

“I don’t think-” Will started, but Jack interrupted.

“Will! Christ alive, the Ripper is showing you a murdered rapist, and Sweet Williams, you really think it’s nothing to worry about? Will, the Ripper is obsessed with you!”

Will scrubbed his hand over his eyes roughly, Hannibal’s heavy gaze resting on his throat.

“Perhaps it is for the best, then, that Will and I are flying out tomorrow. Will and I will be out of the country, surely he’ll be safe in France,” Hannibal commented and Jack sighed.

“Yeah. Hell, just... “Jack looked at him then, so long and deep that Will wanted to shy away, certain he was seeing through the webs Will was weaving. But then he just inhaled slowly and visibly washed his hands of it.

“Have a good time,” Jack said, his hand coming up to squeeze Will’s bicep. “Thanks for coming to take a look. Take care of yourself, alright, son?”

“Yeah,” Will mumbled, easing his glasses up on his nose. “Thanks.”

# Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

> thanks so much for all the well-wishes! I've finally been starting to get over my illness and injury, and things are picking up again!

After the tableau, Jack was supposed to have been joining them for dinner, but he had called Hannibal later in the afternoon and begged off. Once they confirmed a rain check, Hannibal admitted to Will to be selfishly relieved that they didn't have to entertain him that evening.

"Why's that?" Will asked, as he redressed after his shower. His arms were still slightly damp, and the cotton caught on them as he slipped his tee-shirt over his head.
"Because," Hannibal said, sliding into Will's space and lifting the tee back up. "I'm excited for our holiday."

"We're not actually going anywhere," Will said, laconically. But he still lifted his arms as Hannibal slipped the damp cotton right back off him.

"Exactly," Hannibal said. His hands dipped down to play at Will's belt, unbuckling it slowly. The material susurrated smoothly as it slipped from his hips. "An entire week indoors, with just you and I," he mused. "How shall we ever entertain ourselves?" Hannibal said.

Will laughed joyously, even as Hannibal eased his jeans down his still-damp thighs.

The car was quite warm, almost stuffy, but Hannibal had cracked the back windows just slightly to keep them from over-heating. He was grateful for the tinted windows.

They were in a car even Will hadn't known Hannibal had owned, a neat dark blue Chevrolet with a deep trunk, and windows tinted so black as to be opaque. The small, square parking lot, that they were in was enclosed in a square of buildings and looked upon the backdoor to a seedy, red little bar.

"Nothing?" Will lifted up to ask, and Hannibal exhaled slowly, a faint sheen of sweat on his brow.

"Nothing," Hannibal said, his hand wound into Will's curls gently. "Are you entirely sure you-"

"Oh yeah," Will said, and jerked his head upwards. "Just keep a watch out."

He dipped back down, immensely grateful that the car was an automatic and so while the handbrake dug into his chest slightly, the stick was too close to the dash to bother him. Hannibal's cock was warm, throbbing hot and leaking profusely in his mouth, so he swallowed around the head frequently.

Every time he did, Hannibal's eyes slipped shut, and Will lifted to the side to bite his thigh reprovingly. He used both hands to balance himself over the console, so he had made Hannibal hold his own cock loosely around the base so he could suck it without straining himself.

"Anything?" He lifted up again to ask and Hannibal exhaled sharply, his hand squeezing twice around his base reflexively.

"No," Hannibal said, almost harshly, but then he breathed deeply and relaxed. "Nothing yet. He is still in the bar, and presumably, will remain there for at least another couple of minutes…" he trailed off, while gently easing Will's head back down to his crotch and Will laughed.

"Yeah, alright," Will said, fondly. "But you keep an eye out, I'm not losing this opportunity just because you couldn't keep your cock out of my mouth for five minutes."

"A terrible boy," Hannibal lamented. "A rude, lascivious, daring boy."

"I'll bite you," Will warned, and Hannibal laughed softly. "Christ, though you'd probably like that."

Hannibal was still huffing faintly with restrained laughter, so Will opened his mouth and sucked long, and slow on the head of Hannibal's cock before closing his teeth gently, just below the head.

He rubbed his tongue firmly over the tip, and twisted his head slightly, running the sharp edges of his teeth around the rim of Hannibal's tip. Hannibal let out a surprisingly undignified moan and came, splashing in and around Will's mouth, one streak landing high up across Will's cheekbone, catching in his eyelashes.

Will closed his mouth around Hannibal's cock and sucked gently, swallowing lightly until Hannibal tensed his hand in his curls.

"Will," Hannibal said, his voice a shaky, fervent thing and Will shuddered.

"Is he there?" Will asked, lifting a hand to swipe the come from his lashes.

"No, not yet," Hannibal breathed.

"Then, shit, *touch me,*" Will said, and Hannibal lifted him bodily over the console and into his lap.

Hannibal undid Will's top button, but Will was trembling lightly with want, so he shoved his jeans and underwear down his thighs. His cock stood pink, and hard and Hannibal touched

him covetously. His hand was warm and tight around Will's cock, just a little too tight, just a little too demanding.

"Shit, yeah," Will breathed. He spread his thighs as much as he could, his knees trapped and confined deliciously by the waistband of his jeans.

Hannibal rubbed the pad of his thumb over the pink, wet head of Will's cock, repeatedly, as though he were polishing it, and Will's thighs trembled.

"Please," he said quietly, winding his hands into Hannibal's hair.

"Yes?"

"Don't make me say… Just-" Will moaned, his forehead dropping to Hannibal's shoulder.

"Look at me, Will," Hannibal said. His hand slid down Will's cock, a tight, wet tunnel, and he squeezed, gliding upward slowly. Will panted, and lifted his head.

"It's not wrong," Hannibal said quietly, and Will's nails dug into his shoulders. "Do you hear me? It is not wrong for me to touch you like this. Or for you to touch yourself here. Do you hear-"

"Yes, Goddamnit, I hear you," Will said. His nails were digging red little crescent moon shapes into Hannibal's pale skin. "Just…"

"Tell me," Hannibal encouraged and Will groaned into the back of his hand, smearing the drying semen over his cheeks accidentally.

"Fuckin'... Is he there?"

"No," Hannibal said, checking the bar door over Will's shoulder briefly.

"Then finger me, " Will said, a guilty little shiver trailing down his spine.

"We don't have lubricant," Hannibal said, but when Will ground forward into his hand, he lifted his left hand and sucked on his middle finger. Will watched the slow, methodical wetting of his thick, long finger and spread his thighs apart to allow Hannibal's hand to dip down between his legs.

He stroked his wet finger over Will's hole, and eased forward to stroke the outside of his prostate.

"We gotta start keeping lube in the car," Will said mindlessly and Hannibal huffed an amused little sound out. His hand worked tighter on Will's cock, a slick stroke as he eased his finger inside and forward. He stroked the smooth curve of Will's prostate, his thumb working insistently on the slick pink head of his cock.

"I'm so close," Will mumbled into Hannibal's shoulder, working his hips in a slow roll onto Hannibal's finger, and then forward, into his hand.

“Oh no,” Hannibal said. “There he is.”

“Oh, *no,* ” Will said desperately, jerking his head upwards to glance at the door. “He-no, he’s not!” He said indignantly when he saw the still-shut door and the empty parking lot.

Hannibal smirked at him.

“You’re a fuckin’ dick,” Will said, and bit him high up on the throat as retaliation. He sucked a mark onto the warm, soft skin and let himself relax again, and he restarted his slow, filthy grind onto Hannibal’s finger and into his hand.

“My love,” Hannibal said gently, and Will shuddered, winding his hand into the short, soft hair on the back of Hannibal’s head. “I do adore you.”

“Shut up,” Will panted, his toes curling inside his shoes as Hannibal worked his cock faster, tighter.

“Why would I? We both know how much you enjoy this, as much as I enjoy this. Do you not enjoy this? Knowing how I love you?” Hannibal pressed and his left thumb pressed into Will’s prostate from the outside, rolling the pad of his thumb over it firmly.

“I do,” Will gasped mindlessly then, grinding onto Hannibal’s hand, his cheeks pink with pleasure and embarrassment.

“I love you so,” Hannibal said meditatively, lowly. “Don’t you know?” He asked and Will sobbed into his shoulder, smearing semen and tears onto the soft fabric of Hannibal’s casual black jacket. “Does it please you to know how often I think of you? How I think of carving a place out in this world for you, a home for us? How I think of marrying you, and bringing you to bed every night, my love, and-”

His words cut off abruptly as Will kissed him, a hard, demanding kiss as he came riding Hannibal’s hands, fisting his hand so tightly a few soft strands snapped off in his grip.

When they broke apart after a long moment, Hannibal eased his jacket off and used it to clean his hands and Will’s face, gently stroking the come, and tears from his skin.

“Oh,” Hannibal said then. He put the jacket in the back seat and stroked Will’s back gently in one long smooth line. “There he is.”
Will looked, and he was right, finally Beau stumbled out of the bar, thankfully alone. He slammed the door behind him as though he were furious at the bar’s contents. He paused just outside the bar.

With his jacket pulled up high around his throat, he dug in the pocket and dragged out a pack of cigarettes, slipping one into his mouth as he searched for a lighter. They left the car together, not shutting the doors in case the noise alerted their quarry.

It was a strangely easy thing to slip up behind his father, Hannibal at his back, and jam the needle into Beau’s throat. He depressed the plunger and Beau fell forward after just a few

moments of drunken confusion. Hannibal caught him easily, and smiled at him, as Beau cast him a final furious look before he passed out.

# Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

taking some mad liberties with greek and roman myth tbh

“You know, when you were a little baby, you were so gentle. Always so soft. Even when you became a kid, and the other boys your age would be kicking a ball around, and wrestlin’, and fightin’, you never did any of that,” Beau said.

His voice was lower than normal, muffled slightly by the drugs in his system. Will rubbed over the tops of his own arms briskly, warming himself up. The room was warm, and red, like a heart buried in the folds of Hannibal’s house, and the light from beyond the shades was fading as evening crept up.

“The closest you ever came to bein’ a real man was when you were a cop,” Beau mused. “An’ even then… even then you were always surrounded by dogs. Not a hard dog a man should have, either, but small, sweet things. Puppies of animals. Makes sense. You’ve always been a puppy of a man,” he said.

He coughed once, a rattled, chesty sound from low down.

“That’s why you’ve always attracted these men,” he said, and Will swallowed hard.

“You know what I mean. You draw them. Men like Hannibal Lecter. Men like Jack Crawford. Me. You’re soft, and small, and gentle, real men always feel drawn to protect you. Ain’t that true, boy?” Beau challenged, and Will sank into the chair opposite him.

The sunlight leaking in through the closed blinds dappled across his face like prison bars. As evening drew to a close, the sun caught over the wooden chair Beau was strapped to, wrist, waist, thigh and ankle tied with thick leather belts.

It glittered over the high, thin coffee table that Will had carried up from the kitchen. It still had the spatter of a coffee stain on its surface, very faint, from when Will had sat at it, nursing a cup while FBI agents arrested Abel Gideon.

But the stain was covered now, with an elegant velvet sheet, a gift from Hannibal, as was the set of silver knives laid out neatly atop it.

“Is it?” Will asked idly, no real curiosity in his voice. “Is it true?”

Beau watched him for a long moment and Will crossed his arms. His shoes felt confining and small all of a sudden, so he toed them off, and lifted his feet to rest on his knees. Beau watched him with a faint air of self-satisfaction, as though Will had proven him right.

“Tell me how Jack Crawford treats you,” Beau said and Will tilted his head slightly.

“No,” Will said, firmly, simply because he could.

“Like your daddy, isn’t he? I bet he loves you, your little body and your big eyes and your soft curls and your pretty lil mouth, and pretty lil mind. He don’t know what’s wrong with you. Don’t be a little bitch, honey,” Beau warned, and a frisson of terror squeaked down his spine, though Beau was restrained tightly to the armchair.

“Fuck you,” Will said evenly and Beau laughed hoarsely.

“You feel like a big man now, huh? You think you’re fillin’ up your daddy’s boots about now? Oh, baby,” he said with an infuriating fondness. “I do love you, honey.”

“Fuck you.”

“You’ve always been my favourite,” he insisted and Will swallowed back bile. “Darlin’, you know exactly why you always ignored those boys in the past, don’t you?”

Will stayed silent, the rush of blood in his ears loud and harsh.

“It’s because you knew. Didn’t you? Real deep down inside, so you don’t need to acknowledge it, you always knew if it wasn’t them it’d be you,” Beau said and Will stood so abruptly that the chair tipped back.

“No,” he said, shakily. “Don’t you-”

“You always knew,” Beau said gently, lovingly. “You knew who it was I wanted, and you picked yourself over them, every single time. Didn’t you? You knew it was you I was dreamin’ of, and you let me take those boys, whether they wanted it or not, ‘cause you knew if I wasn’t *thinking* of you during, I’d need to be *looking* at you during. You saved yourself, every time-”

Will didn’t scream, or yell, but fury was so loud inside his head he didn’t need to. His hand was cold with sweat when he grabbed the knife. He slammed it blade-first into the top of Beau’s hand.

It skewered through his flesh, into the arm of the chair. It remained curiously bloodless for a moment, even as Beau roared. Then, like rain, little beads of red pearled along the embedded blade.

“You little bitch,” Beau said shakily. His fingers were flexing against the chair, as though he sought to drag his hand out from the blade. “Oh, you fucking bitch, you’re gonna get it now.”

“How?” Will pressed. He picked up a second knife from the set, a slightly longer blade with a thicker handle. “What are you gonna do?”

Beau didn’t answer for much more than a yelp while Will searched for the dip of flesh under his collarbone. Having found the hollow little curve under cartilage, he slipped the blade in,

nestling it under the collarbone and upwards, so it peeked from his shoulder, making a sharp little tent under his shirt.

Beau shuddered with pain, and the knife squealed horribly, grinding against the underside of his collarbone. Will reached out and tapped the handle upwards out of curiosity and Beau grunted, a low-down animal noise of pain. An instinctual apology bubbled up his throat but he bit it back before it could surface.

"...always such a soft kid," Beau grunted. "You've always been so gentle. You're not so gentle anymore, are you?"

Hannibal was stirring something thick in a pot when Will joined him in the kitchen. It smelled warm, faintly smoky. Hannibal looked at him when Will moved beside him, his eye raised slightly and Will scrubbed a hand over the back of his head lightly.

"Just taking a breather," he said. Hannibal put his spoon down, and lowered the heat under the pot.

"Are you having second thoughts?" Hannibal asked levelly, but Will was shaking his head before he had even finished.

"No, I just need a second. He keeps trying to rile me up," Will said. "I just need a minute."

"Hermes was known as the god of guile, you know. The god of lying. And of language, deception, learning. The god of guiding souls to their death," Hannibal said, as he transferred some dark red and steaming liquid into a shallow pan.

"I feel like you're hinting at something," Will said, dryly.

"He was also the god of feasts," Hannibal continued. He lifted a small paring knife, and presented it, handle-first to Will. He nodded at a small bowl filled with some fresh green herb. Will began to chop it finely. As he did, a scent rose from the dish, a clean, clear smell like pine.

"There are similarities between myself and Hermes," Hannibal said and kindly ignored Will's snort. "A particular similarity is that Hermes fell in love with Perseus, a slayer of monsters, known for his beauty."

"Are you leaving me for the slayer of Medusa?" Will asked, and Hannibal cast a fond, if irritated look at him.

"Not even Perseus matches your beauty," Hannibal said and ignored Will miming gagging into the herb bowl. "Don't spit on the marjoram please. My point is-" Hannibal said.

"There was a point to this?" Will asked and Hannibal smacked Will's knife with his spoon.

"Hermes, and Perseus were a pair that fought a monster together. Hermes loaned Perseus his winged sandals - a symbol of Hermes' ability to guide souls to their death. Of course, Hermes

is often ignored in favour of Andromeda, but my point remains. Hermes teaches Perseus how to bring a soul to the afterlife, and they celebrate with a feast."

"Oh," Will said. There was a silence for a long moment as Will diced a red onion Hannibal nudged toward him. "You want to use him for… everything?"

"Everything," Hannibal confirmed, opening the oven and slipping a dish inside. "I don't see why we should not celebrate our return home from France-" he said, wryly. "With a feast."

"A real feast, you mean," Will said. "Not just a small dinner, like we had agreed on. You want to feed every part of my father to all of our friends."

Hannibal moved then, gently lifted his hand to the back of Will's neck and drew him in close.

"He has taken up so very much of your life with his horror. I see no reason why any of him should be allowed to escape your horror."

"Alright," Will said. He brushed onion skin from his fingertips brusquely, and put the knife onto the marble countertop with a clang. "But you have to do something for me."

"Anything," Hannibal said, gently and genuinely. Will swallowed hard.

"I need you to go out. I need you to go prepare a second victim for your sounder," he said. Hannibal watched him closely, his fingers dry and gentle, slipping down around Will's throat.

"If the Ripper kills while you're in France, you cannot be a suspect," Will said quietly. "We might as well get good use out of this alibi."

"An alibi we crafted for you," Hannibal said. "Not me. If we take this opportunity, and I am seen, we have ruined your alibi. A risk that seems excessive to merely create an alibi for me."

"The sounder needs to be complete," Will said. "I want Beau to be the final one, and I see no reason to waste a perfectly good alibi."

"An increased risk-" Hannibal started to say.

"And a potent reward!" Will interrupted. "Do you want to be caught?"

Hannibal shut his eyes briefly, a minute expression of pain caught on his features and Will thumped his palm against his shoulder gently.

"You taunt them, dance just out of reach, you dangle your truth in their faces and for what? To laugh at their ignorance? Because, Hannibal, God damn it, they'll be the ones laughing when you get locked up."

"Dear-" Hannibal started, but Will was full, with fear and anger.

"I won't wait for you," he vowed and Hannibal looked at him as though he had proposed marriage.

“Yes, you would,” he said, gently and Will grimaced.

“Yes, I would, so don’t make me. Stop taunting them so much, and cover your tracks better. Because, now you’re covering mine too.”

“I so rarely allow people to interrupt me,” Hannibal said, casually. “And yet you do it so frequently.”

“If we’re comparing who forgives the greater sin, I think I win for accepting murder and cannibalism,” Will said dryly.

“You’ll never let that go,” Hannibal chided.

“It’s my go-to gotcha,” Will admitted and Hannibal chuckled and tucked a curl behind Will’s ear.

“I’ll never win another argument again,” Hannibal said reprovingly. Will smiled and moved forward to Hannibal, who opened his arms easily.

“So, why are you truly down here?” Hannibal asks, stroking his hand gently over Will’s hair.

“Waiting,” Will said evenly. “I just stabbed my father.”

“Fatally?” Hannibal asks, griping Will’s shoulders gently and easing him back to look at him.

“No, through the hand and again under the collarbone,” Will admitted. “I left the knives in, so he won’t bleed out.”

“So it is not his death you are waiting for,” Hannibal said, his thumb stroking the bouncy length of a curl at the back of Will’s head. Every time he reaches the end, it springs from his gasp, bounces right back up again.

“No. I’m waiting for the guilt,” Will said.

“And it is not coming?”

“No. Apparently not. Which I feel guilty about.”

“Meta-emotions about guilt are even less useful than the original emotion,” Hannibal said reprovingly. “Do you doubt that he deserves this?”

“No,” Will breathes. Hannibal smells like orange, and more faintly, marjoram when he breathes him in.

“Then trust your instincts,” Hannibal chides. “You do not feel guilty because you should not.”

“He deserves this,” Will said abruptly. Hannibal looked at him, holding him gently and watched Will realise. “He deserves this,” Will said again, lifting his hand to cup Hannibal’s face gently.

“Yes, my beloved,” Hannibal says. “He deserves this, and more.”

# Chapter 26

Hannibal leaves Will responsible for the bubbling stock pot on the oven, a hefty charge. He carries a bag with him when he leaves, a small, neat, designer duffel bag.

His hair is slicked back, like how he usually wears it when they're in public. Will stirs the pot slowly and suppresses the urge to go over and run his hands through it, mess it up. It’s held in place for a reason.

Hannibal kisses him before he leaves, and reminds him for the third time when to add the basil, and Will jabs the handle of the spoon into Hannibal's ribcage in retaliation, a light, painless stab that makes Hannibal smile. When he’s gone, into the silence and dark warmth of the night to find his victim, Will lowers the temperature of the pot.

It boils fruitlessly, bones of nondescript origin bobbing in the broth and Will covers the pot with the lid so he doesn’t have to look at it.

When he goes upstairs to check on Beau, he doesn’t find him.

The room is empty.

It’s a very small room at the top of the stairs, tucked behind the master bedroom, like an afterthought. Its only features are that it’s small enough to have only a slat for a window, more for exterior symmetry than internal function, and the closet at the wall that adjoins it and Hannibal’s bedroom.

The room is decorated functionally, with wipe-down linoleum flooring, wipe-clean paint on the walls, and a large plain of drop-sheet plastic on the floor. The plastic is rucked slightly under the pressure of the chair legs.

Hannibal keeps the plastic roll in the closet with his potter’s wheel, and his oil paints and easel, an easy excuse for messy artistic endeavours if anyone ever asks. To Will’s knowledge, nobody ever has.

Will had kept the small kitchen table a clear two feet from the cheap wooden chair he had belted Beau to, but it has been knocked over in the time he’s been gone from the room. The belts are abandoned, strewn off the chair as though Beau had gnawed them loose, or simply burst from them, in a furious birth.

The door had been locked. A simple key in the door, but Will knows he locked it before he went downstairs to Hannibal.

As he stands still, there is a faint rustle from inside the closet, as though the roll of plastic is settling, or someone has brushed off of it. The roll of knives are missing three. Will can account for two, buried in his father’s flesh, but he cannot account for the third. Beau is too

smart to have removed the blades unless he had a way to close the wounds. There is no tell-tale trail of blood.

Had Will unlocked the door when he came back in? The key is in his hand, but had he slipped it home, turned it, or had the door simply swung free? He can't remember.

When he closes his eyes, Will's mind paints him the picture of Beau in the closet, bleeding sluggishly from his collarbone and hand, clutching a blade. He approaches the closet as one approaches a wild animal, creeping from the side, as though he will surprise it.

He listens hard and cannot hear anything. He lifts a knife from the spilled velvet and weighs it in his hand consideringly.

There is nowhere else for Beau to be in this room. The window is too narrow for him. There is nothing in the closet but plastic and art supplies, but if Beau is in there, and armed then Will does not have a very good chance.

Beau is stronger, with the rush of adrenaline from his injuries, he feels wronged and therefore righteous. It would be very easy for him physically to take Will down, stab him, or slit his throat, or pin him with the blade to his carotid and rape Will here, on the floor of his revenge.

But Beau loves him, and Will is not above sobbing and crying for his daddy if it grants him a moment's reprieve, long enough to distract him and gut him. Will comes closer to the closet. He sees himself, bleeding out from the throat on linoleum floor as his daddy holds him close, and Abigail Hobbes whispers *do you see?* in his ear.

He doesn't, so he ignores her, and he throws open the closet door, the knife raised with a straight shoulder, as though it is a gun and he's a cop in New Orleans again. The closet is empty. As he looks at it, the plastic roll continues to list to the side, and it lands with a thump on the floor, throwing up a cloud of clay dust.

The closet is empty. As he realises this, he whirls around at once, but he's not fast enough. Beau's blade catches him. It's thrown off course by his dodge, so it slips from its aim on his carotid to the fleshy swell of where his throat joins his shoulder.

It shears through flesh neatly, so sharp he doesn't feel the pain. Beau is panting, as though he has run to him, and the door is still swinging slightly in his wake. When Will rears away, the blade slips from his body neatly, carving him like warm butter and Will can see that the smallest blade from the roll is placed too neatly beside its spilled brothers.

He can feel his heartbeat in his wound, and when he blinks he sees Beau using the tiny knife, the one meant for flaying to pick, or break the lock on the door, and placing it down beside the others with care. Will doesn't drop his knife when he backs away from Beau's advances, but he uses his free hand to cup the new mouth of his throat, spilling blood.

As he dodges Beau's slash, and sees the pale square of skin healed around his bitemark on Beau's throat, he clamps down harder on his own bleeding wound and thinks dizzily *we match*. Will expects the fight to be shorter, he waits for Beau to grip him close and slit his

throat, but he doesn't and Will cannot get close enough to sink his knife in him either. Instead, as a distraction, he throws the dagger right at Beau.

It spins too much to do real harm, but as Beau dodges it, Will shoves around him and darts from the room. He gets to the top of the stairs and throws his feet forward, taking the steps three at a time. His father's strides behind him are lunging, and Will has a moment to remember how much taller than him Beau is, how much longer his steps are before Beau's hand closes in his hair.

He's tugged backward by the force of it, his feet flying up and he yelps. Beau yanks him, his feet planted at the top of the stairs, his hand clamped tightly in Will's curls as he drags him up the steps.

Will bounces off the edge of each step as he is pulled backwards. One hand is clasped to his throat, which thankfully, already seems to be scabbing, and the other holds his hair at the root, trying to minimise the pain. His feet swing and dangle freely in the air as his ass smacks into the top step and Beau reaches for him.

His curls are wrapped around Beau's fingers, knotted in his rings, and Will grits his teeth. He shoves himself forward with all the power he can muster, and even over Beau's outraged roar, he can hear the snap and rip of his hair as its torn from his scalp.

He bounces down the stairs, a rolled up ball that falls hard down each step, and when he gets to the bottom, the bare patch at the back of his head is throbbing, and alternatingly hot and cold.

Beau snarls at him from the top of the stairs, a clutch of Will's curls held in his fist like a wilting bouquet. Will runs. He makes it to the kitchen, where the stock is still bubbling, but quietly, and Beau follows him. They are separated by the island, and Will waits for Beau to vault it.

He is too big and strong and direct not to. But for a moment he doesn't, he feints right, and so Will darts left and that's when Beau vaults the island. Will curses his own stupidly as he rears back. Beau is advancing on him, but the knife block is on the island.

There is a heavy chopping board on the counter but he is directly in front of the oven, so it is a foot away. It may as well be an ocean away, because Will wouldn't be able to reach either in this state. So, instead, as Beau advances, Will lets him.

He even lets the tears run down his cheeks, and Beau's steps slow slightly, and Will suddenly knows that Beau doesn't have any idea what to do with Will now that he's got him. He blinks and he is his father, standing over a small crying son who bleeds and sobs, and the fury in him says *protect* and *own*.

But they are not warring instincts, Will understands for the first time. It is not 'son' here, and then a distance away, 'lover'; it is twined in a sick mess in his father's brain.

Will isn’t in his own body when he stands. He doesn’t come back to himself until he’s taken the hot metal lid from the stock pot.

The handle is steely-red from the steam, and it burns his hand, but he is so distant that he doesn’t feel it. He slams it into the side of Beau’s face, and it makes a sick hissing noise as the metal collides with his sweating flesh.

Beau crumples, his mouth open in a yawning question. Will doesn’t come back to himself until he picks up the pot by the burning handles and tips the bubbling stock onto Beau’s and chest. The stock soaks his clothes quickly and Will can smell the burning flesh, a steamy-red scent that hurts his nose.

Bones topple from the pot as Will upends it, and a small flash of white bone, as gently curved as a daisy petal lands on Beau’s ribcage, and distantly Will recognises the match. Connected ribcage on the inside, huffing as Beau breathes heavy and deep in his slumber, and the smoky, well-seasoned human rib on the outside.

Will is replacing the heavy pot back onto the oven when Hannibal comes home.

“Oh,” Hannibal says, as Will takes the kitchen towel from the countertop and presses it to his throat. "Well,” he says, surveying the unconscious man, Will standing over him, and the sea of broth slowly spreading over the tile.

“I’ll just make another,” he says, looking at the stock as it seeps outward, almost touching his shoes.

# Chapter 27

Jack tried to call him early that morning, but Will ignored it. He hadn't prepared a proxy, and so instead he left the phone in the drawer, and checked his email using a VPN.

It wouldn't hide his true ISP if the FBI's technical analysts checked it, but if it got that far, he supposed there wouldn't be much he could do anyway. Jack had emailed him early in the morning, and attached photographs of the newest scene, with a brief apology.

Will downloaded them in zip, and went to make a coffee while they loaded. With the smell of ground beans warming him, he took a deep breath for the first time all day. There was a quiet, rhythmic thudding from downstairs.

Beau was awake.

He went back to the computer to look at the photos, ignoring the noises, his coffee warming his hands. Hannibal was still sleeping. The study was warm with early morning sunlight, golden and hazy.

Hannibal had been the model of efficiency, even while Will stood, struck dumb beside the oven. Beau had been already starting to stir, and so Hannibal disappeared into his study and came back, so swiftly Will barely noticed his absence. He returned bearing a small, sharp little syringe, which he injected neatly into the exposed vein of Beau's upper arm.

Beau quieted quickly, stilling on the floor.

"This will keep him asleep for a time," Hannibal said, disposing of the needle in a minuscule diabetics sharps container under the countertop. "But we will need to move him quickly. With his bulk, I would need to dose him again soon to keep him unconscious, and I'd prefer to use as little medication as possible."

Hannibal had brought a wheelchair from the hidden basement, a huge clanking thing, grey and with a high headrest and movable leg supports. It was as much for aesthetics as use. Together, they hefted Beau into the chair, and Hannibal strapped his chest, wrists and ankles to it.

Once they reached the trapdoor in the pantry, they carried the wheelchair down the stairs, Beau's head lolling from side to side.

Hannibal had sent Will upstairs to clean the spilled stock, with instructions to use the chemicals under the sink to erase the stains from the white marble.

When Will had finished scrubbing the floor to a shining finish, Hannibal had finally appeared back upstairs, faintly pink across the cheeks from strain. He banished Will to go nap while he

redid the stock. Will had showered quickly, then gone to Hannibal's bed, and wrapped himself in silky sheets, and slept deeply for a long time.

The photographs were taken well, nicely framed with strong lighting, not too white or warm. As Jack said in the email, it was hard to empathise for the scene in photographs, much harder than it was in real life, but still very possible.

The first showcased a rounded aesthetic, as golden and circular as the first scene. It was outside, in a large cornfield, as far as Will could tell. The photo was from above, the large circle within the flattened section of field big enough to not be immediately distinguishable.

The next photograph was closer, and Will saw the naked body, twisted into a gentle curve. Its rounded angle matched that of the wooden horse its wrists were tied to. Together, it made a circle, the running horse a long, lean curve of movement. Even as it lay, tipped on its left side, it carried the air of movement.

The artist had been particularly talented. Will could see Hannibal's careful hands forming its shape, elongating its neck, stretching out its legs.

It was a pale, golden horse, it looked to be made of some soft wood, its lowest side was golden-stained with ripe grass. Dominic Joyce lay opposite the horse. In the scene, he appeared peaceful, almost sleeping.

Only the violent angle his arms lay at, wrenched by the wires wrapped around his wrists, attached to the throat of the wooden horse displayed his death. For a moment, Will's rage trembled his hands. His coffee cup shook violently enough to upset its contents, and so he rested it on the desk.

The next photograph was different. Its violence was faster, rougher, darker. Joyce's front and right side had been hidden by his position, but this photo had him laid on his back. His face, chest, thigh were ripped up, torn as though he had been dragged face-first over cobbled streets.

His mouth had appeared to have been caught on a stone, his lower lip split lengthways, causing the soft flesh to part almost obscenely, revealing white teeth. His lower right canine was slightly crooked.

The relief was overwhelming. The cuts had not bled. Though they were deep, aggressive, furious, they were all pink, yellowed as they cut through fat. No red. Joyce had already been dead when his body was decorated.

The next photograph was a close-up of his face and Will examined it quickly. The torn lip was post-mortem as well. There was significant petechial haemorrhaging, pre-mortem.

Jack had attached a copy of Price and Zeller's field notes and preliminary write-ups, and Will scanned it quickly.

There was a copy of a post-mortem CT scan, showing a subdural hematoma in the anterior left temporal lobe. Will mumbled to himself as he read the toxicity report. COD was that Joyce had overdosed on LSD.

But that wouldn't usually cause petechial hemorrhaging. However, there was also significant amounts of penicillin in his system, which could.
In the small notes section of the report, Zeller had scribbled in a sentence that confirmed Will's burgeoning suspicions.

Just before his death, Joyce had started treatment for chlamydia.

After Hannibal awoke and readied himself for the day, he followed the faint scent of Will's awful aftershave into the basement. He found Will sitting quietly in the dark, watching over the unconscious body of his father.

Will's eyes flicked over to Hannibal as he entered. Will held the handle of a small sledgehammer in his right hand loosely.

"When will he wake up?" Will asked.

Hannibal checked his watch. "It's hard to know for certain, but based on his elevated heart rate when administered and his bulk, I'd estimate he'll wake anywhere from five to twenty minutes from now."

Will waited in silence, and so Hannibal joined him, selecting a seat slightly behind Will's.

"Are you alright?" Hannibal pressed, but Will didn't respond. Eventually, Beau's breath began to speed up, his eyes moving under his lids more rapidly. Hannibal excused himself to check Beau's pulse and contraction of the pupils.

"You killed Dominic Joyce like Oenomaus, hmm?" Will said abruptly, as though voice had risen in the midst of thought. "Dragged to death by his horse."

"Technically, the horse could not have dragged anyone to death," Hannibal said. "And I allowed Dominic to overdose himself with a significant amount of acid. His death was not violent."

"Death is always violent," Will muttered.

"Not always," Hannibal said. "In any case, I read a book once, that said Oenomaus was raped by Laius. Afterwards, he was murdered by Pelops and Poseidon, the former lovers. Pelops fathered Chrysippus."

"I don't know him," Will said absentmindedly. The hammer gleamed dully as Will twisted the handle.

"Many don't," Hannibal said comfortingly. "He was a hero, who was kidnapped and raped by Laius."

Will gave a bitter twist of a smile with no humour. “Am I supposed to be Chrysippus?”

Hannibal didn’t respond, but there was a harsh cough from behind him then, as Beau awoke.

“Get out of the way,” Will said, and Hannibal abided, though the rudeness chafed him. Will watched Beau twist within his restraints, and gasp.

At some stage during Hannibal’s absence, Will had popped up the legs of the wheelchair so that Beau’s feet were at a right angle to his torso. His ankles and calves were affixed firmly with leather straps to the metal, and Will had added a thick leather strap around the headrest of the wheelchair and Beau’s forehead.

Beau was held immobile, only his fingers and eyes moving wildly as the sedative left his system.

“Did you know he killed my mother?” Will said abruptly, and Hannibal looked at him.

“He gave her chlamydia,” Will continued. Beau blinked, his mouth working silently and Will stood, and watched him. “He never did tell me what was wrong with her. Why she was ill. Why she died. I didn’t even think about it that much; I just took my daddy’s word and believed she was sick. It’s because he didn’t let her go to a hospital. Because he was embarrassed. Because he got chlamydia raping some boy, and he gave it to my mother, and he knew. He knew what was happening to her when she got pelvic inflammatory disease from it. He knew it was his fault, and he wouldn’t let her go get treated. And he knew it was his fault when the disease became Fitz-Hugh-Curtis Syndrome. When he treated my mother with Xanax, and heroin from back-alley drug dealers, and she was screaming in pain while her insides swelled thick and useless with bacteria and infection. You did that,” Will said softly, evenly, as Beau grit his teeth.

“Was it hard to get Ella-May to stay at home? I bet it wasn’t,” Will said. “I bet she just listened to you when you told her she didn’t need a hospital, she was sick and they couldn’t do anything for her. Did she even try go get treatment?”

“She was going,” Beau rasped. “Till I reminded her that we couldn’t afford the medical bills. It was her idea. We knew she was going to die, anyway. She said it to me, she said ‘what’s the point? I’m going, I’m not leaving you and Will owing money.’”

“My mother-” Will started, but Beau interrupted him. He kept his eyes on him as much as he could as Will approached the wheelchair. His footsteps were loud and uneven on the tiled floor.

“Now, you listen here, I loved Ella-May, with all my heart!” Beau hissed.

“But you were more important, right?” Will pressed and Beau spluttered.

Beau didn’t answer. He didn’t have time to, as Will swung the sledgehammer and smashed it into the thin bones connecting his ankle to his foot.

He circled him, Beau's scream loud and rough as Will slammed the hammer into his opposite ankle. The cracking noises were plentiful, and high, like the sound of popcorn in a fire. Tendons snapped and tiny bones cracked, and Will watched.

The hammer was loose in his hand, as Beau's feet collapsed inward, no longer held upright. The heels pointed out at opposite angles, the toes of each foot facing each other. His ankles swelled quickly, a sickly purple colour that gathered fast.

The skin wasn't broken very much, excepting a small compound fracture on the right outer ankle. The bone that jutted whitely from the skin was sharp and small as a dagger, twitching in its hole as Beau writhed in agony.

"Did you know? About what he did to my mother?" Will asked, and Hannibal had to strain to hear him over the klaxon wails of Beau's screams.

"I did not," Hannibal said, and Will watched him a moment too long, as though he didn't believe him. Hannibal moved slowly, so as not to startle him. He reached out, but Will turned. He slammed the sledgehammer into the metal table, where it sunk into it with a resounding clang.

"Don't fuckin' touch me," Will said, and left Hannibal downstairs, Beau still roaring in his wheelchair. For the first time, in a very long time, Hannibal felt a frisson of true fear.

# Chapter 28

Hannibal watched Will leave, and stood quietly for a moment. He retrieved a gag from the tower of drawers at the far end of the room. Beau tried to bite him when he affixed the gag, but with his head strapped so firmly to the headrest he couldn't move much.

When Beau was silenced, fat tears still welling in his swollen eyes, Hannibal followed Will upstairs. It took a moment to climb the stairs, and follow Will out to the small balcony of the third floor bedroom he so favoured.

He sat, leaning back against the wall, a tumbler of whiskey in his hand.

"Your father is in immense pain," Hannibal noted. The sealed whiskey bottle rolled away from Will, and he caught it, righting it swiftly. Will only grunted in response, and took the bottle from Hannibal's hand. He drank deeply, the marshy odour of liquor rising to Hannibal's nose.

"Did you know?" Will asked, once again, and Hannibal took a small step further out onto the tiny balcony. He leaned against the chilled railing, and knotted his hands together neatly.

"I suspected," he said, at last, though Will was burning up beside him, almost radiating hot fury. "When I met Thomas King for the first time, I had noticed your father did not use protection. The lack of a condom, the undefined, yet severely painful illness your mother suffered, the fact that you never mentioned her medical care, or doctors… Combine that with the knowledge that Joyce was prescribed penicillin, I made an educated guess."

"You didn't tell me," Will said, lowly. The whiskey tumbler was running low, but rather than topping up his glass, Will simply unscrewed the top and drank from the bottle.

He abandoned the glass perilously on the thin metal railing and Hannibal rescued it before it could topple.

"It was not for me to tell-" He started, depositing the glass inside the guest bedroom. He rested it on a small side table, next to a crystal lamp. He took a moment to admire the juxtaposition of the crystal lamp, the antique side table, and the cheap glass, still grimy with cheaper liquor.

"Not about that," Will said. His voice shook slightly, and his eyes were glazed, as though he was rapidly encroaching drunkenness. "About the anger."

"The anger?" Hannibal said, and rejoined Will on the balcony, though it felt immensely crowded with both of them.

"This," Will said. He gestured with the bottle, spilling a few drops of whiskey from the bottle directly onto his shirt. "The rage, how it takes over everything. It feels like.. Like my organs are shrivelling up, like everything in me is turning grey. I...it's not a natural anger, it's a...a fury."

Hannibal's silence was telling, and Will climbed to his feet unsteadily, and turned to him.

"I've always known this is my biggest weakness. I absorb the personality traits of people I'm close to. Hannibal, is this your anger?"

"I'm not angry," Hannibal said and Will yanked himself upright, his hands clenched on the railing.

"You're lying," he hissed. Hannibal relaxed his grip and subtly held onto the railing.

"This isn't mine," Hannibal insisted. "This is not your father's. This, Will, this is wholly yours."

"Oh, really?" Will pressed. "Everything... every tiny anger, the daily slights... every microaggression you get for being an immigrant, for being queer, none of that bothers you?"

"It is not worth thinking about," Hannibal said evenly and Will wheeled around abruptly, laughing with a harsh coldness.

"That doesn't bother you? Fine. But after your parents, after the orphanage, what they did to you, you're not angry? After what they did to your sister, you're not angry?"

"Do not-" Hannibal started, only to bite his tongue, and restrain himself. "You are the only person who can so infuriate me," he said, as though it were a compliment.

"It makes me angry," Will admitted, lowly. "Looking at how I grew up, that makes me angry. But it's so strange now, because it feels so distant. Like it happened to someone else. Someone I'm not, anymore."

Will put the bottle on the ground, and Hannibal's ear twitched at the unpleasant clinking sound. He stared at Hannibal for a long moment.

"Why are you holding onto the railing so tight?" Will asked, almost in a teasing tone. "Do you think I'm gonna push you?"

"One should always be as prepared as possible for all eventualities," Hannibal said dismissively. Will grabbed him abruptly, his fingers tight like locks on his shoulder. His hands were hot at the palms, radiating heat but his fingertips were cold and stiff.

"Why not go inside then? If you think I'm gonna push you? Minimise the risk."

Hannibal looked at him then, and Will frowned automatically. "You want me to."

"I do not either want, or not want it. It is wholly your choice."

"Why?"

"I told you once that I did not see why your father should be denied your horror. That is true. In fact, I don't see why the world should be denied your horror."

“Are you saying-”

“I am saying, that if your desire is to visit your fury on me, I would be proud to be a part of your evolution.”

“And if I don’t push you? What then?”

“Nothing. You don’t, we move on. We could finish this with your father, as soon as you would like to. I can deal the finishing blow if you wish. Let us cook together, eat, bathe. We shall rest together. Heal, recover. We still have two days before we must rejoin society.”

“That sounds good,” Will said. Hannibal relaxed his hands from the railing, to reach for Will.

“You’re right, I think. How I feel right now, it’s not absorbed from my father. I didn’t take it from you,” Will said. Hannibal inclined his head in a slight nod, his hair falling loose from its gelled style.

“I s-”

“This is mine,” Will said, and shoved him, high up on the chest. Hannibal’s feet swung high and fast as he tipped over the railing, and Will watched him fall, tumble, and land on the concrete walkway, three storeys down.

# Chapter 29

Will left the balcony, and descended the stairs with only a slight tremor to his knees. He slipped inside the pantry, and down into the hidden room. It was bright, white light shone from the fluorescents and made Beau's old wheelchair gleam and sparkle under them.

It smelled heavily of bleach, and faintly of blood. Will stood over Beau. Blood clotted and congealed around his dagger wounds in his hand and shoulder. His feet still turned inwards, grotesquely. They were turning blue.

Will touched the right foot gently, the chilled blue skin seemed to sink inwards without bounce. Beau chuffed in pain, like a wounded dog, so Will stopped. His hands twitched. The single circles of rough rope that he had tied tightly around each one of his own wrists chafed him, and he fought the urge to remove them.

"Are you gonna beg me to let you go?" Will asked. There was a small metal table, like a medical instruments rest near the autopsy table. Will dragged it over, the latex gloves on his hands squeaking unpleasantly against the clean metal. He was starting to sweat, his palms inside sticking to the latex and pooling in the fingertips.

"Why would I bother, Will?" Beau said, his eyes fixed to Will's face. "I'm going, anyway."

"What?" Will said, startled. He stilled, frowning. Beau watched him.

"The disease," Beau said. "The pain, the arthritis, the...infection… I'm sterile, now. What's the point in living anymore when it all ends with me? You do it, for me. Let me go."

"This isn't for you," Will said. He tracked his eyes over Beau, catching on his gaunt cheeks, the thin bones showing through sallow skin.

"It doesn't matter. What's the difference?" Beau lamented, and Will's stomach twisted up with disgust at the blatant self-pity.

"Do you… are you even going to apologise to me? Do you regret it, at all?" Will pressed. He wanted to shake Beau, pull him out of the wheelchair and smack him.

"Apologise to you? Will, kid… We're just alike, you and me. Are you gonna apologise to me?"

"No!" Will said harshly. His hands twitched with restrained violence, his heartbeat pounding fast. His tongue felt thick and stupid in his mouth, too overwhelmed with words to voice any.

"Why should I, then?" Beau said, his voice a flat, cold thing that turned Will's stomach upside down.

"You hurt people-"

“So do you.”

“It’s different-” Will started, and he hated Beau abruptly, with a fierce anger. This wasn’t how he had wanted this conversation to go, but it had, because once again Beau had taken control and driven them both. It didn’t matter that he was splattered in his own dried blood, his feet smashed sideways, the hole in his collarbone where Will had put the second knife still bleeding a sluggish red.

“No. It’s not. We both hurt people, Will. But I accepted that, a long time ago. It’s taken you this long to accept it too. I’m not gonna apologise to you, but I will tell you, I’m proud of you. We’ve never been this alike, before,” Beau said. The top of his cheeks, and across the bridge of his nose, that swathe of skin that usually carried a light flush, pale freckles if it had been particularly sunny lately was wan and cold-looking.

Will realised abruptly that after today, the bridge of his father’s nose would never again freckle because he had spent too long out in the sun. When Will had been young, he had played little league for a few weeks in one small, swampy Southern town.

His dad had thrown a baseball to him again, and again until he could hit it right, and when they had went back into their trailer, they drank ice-cold ginger ale, and Will remembered seeing how red the bridge of Dad’s nose had gotten, how sunburned he had been.

Will recoiled slightly, his heartbeat thick and sludgy in his ears. His veins thrummed with righteous, vindictive anger. The handle of the blade was cold in his fingers, and suddenly Will had a bizarre memory of a hazy summer day. He had been too small to know how old he was. He remembered feeling absurdly high up, sitting on his dad’s shoulders, his big wide hands on both his knees, steadying him.

Dad had bought him an ice cream, a baby cone, they called it and it fit perfectly in his small, sticky little fist.

“Don’t be drippin’ it on my hair now, boy,” Dad had said, and Will giggled a little, knowing he wouldn’t be angry if he did. Vanilla ice-cream ran down his hand, chilling it. Will had leaned forward, holding onto his dad’s hair and steadying himself. He thrust the cone in front of Dad’s face, offering him a taste.

“No, no,” Dad had laughed, letting go of Will’s leg for a moment to wave his hand in front of his face. “You have that. That’s for you.”

“I’m sorry,” Will said, before he knew he had spoken, and he wasn’t sure what he was apologising for. For himself, for what he had done, for what he was about to do, for the way his dad had been born. He didn’t know.

But he slipped his hand into Dad’s hair and held the short curls gently, and with the other hand he thrust the knife deeply into Dad’s throat. Blood spurted, then poured, then dripped, and still Will held it, until Beau’s eyes slid shut, and the blood chilled and dried on Will’s face and hand.

When it was done, Will left the knife in, and wheeled Beau back upstairs. It was hellish inching him up the steps, he had to steady the chair, then roll the wheels up to the lip of the step, then heave the chair upwards.

It had been easier bringing him down, with Hannibal's help, but finally he managed, wrenching the chair up and then shoving it forward. There was one terrible moment when Will reached the pantry floor and had to lean forward, and open the door where Beau's wheelchair had stuttered and started to roll backwards into the trap door. But he had caught it.

When he was done, he brought Beau into the house, back to the artist's room he had started in. Then, Will left him. He went downstairs, and checked the concrete walkway, finally. He half-expected Hannibal to be lying, waiting for him, for revenge, or for him to be gone completely, but he was there. Crumpled into a ball, with what appeared to be two broken legs and a nasty head wound.

Will checked his pulse. When it thrummed to life underneath his fingertips, he swallowed hard. He was still unconscious, but Will had work to do, so he kissed his forehead quickly, and left him there.

It took over an hour for Will to entirely clean the basement, to sweep, and bleach and wipe down his and Hannibal's fingerprints. He didn't plan on the police finding this room, but he couldn't be sure that they wouldn't. The existence of this room alone would tip them off that Hannibal was the Ripper, and Will didn't want that. Far too heavy a police presence for the Ripper.

If Will did it right, there would be far less media coverage and government attention for a simple, generic murderer. Once he was done, the smell of bleach strong in his nose, he left through the trapdoor, then wiped that down too.

The rope was starting to make his wrists bleed lightly now, and that wouldn't help, so he wound duct tape around each circlet of rope to stop the blood dripping.

When he was done downstairs, he returned to Beau and wiped him down. He didn't disturb the blood, but wiped down the knife, ran a brush through his hair, and wiped down his feet. He left Beau in the room, and rejoined Hannibal outside.

He was still unconscious, and so Will held the knife that had killed his father by the blade with his gloved hands and wrapped Hannibal's loose right hand around the blade a few times. He returned the knife to Beau's body, leaving it resting on his lap.

When he was done, he went back to Hannibal's office and poured himself a stiff drink. He lit a fire and burned the gloves, the rope, the duct tape. He refilled his glass, and drained it quickly, and then picked up his cell phone from Hannibal's desk drawer. From memory, he dialled Jack.

With his voice still rough from whiskey, and tears, Will spoke to Jack for the first time in almost a week.

He said; “God, Jack, please-please help. He says - he killed my dad. Oh my God, I pushed him-”

“Will?” Jack demanded. “What the hell is going on?”

His sobs weren’t fake, and so he let his tears fall. He examined the rope burn around his wrists while he spoke.

“He wouldn't let me leave, he kept me and Dad in the room all the time and then-then he took me out to a bedroom and tied me to the bed-and- oh, my God. Jack. He left, and when he came back he said he killed my dad. I got free of the ropes and I just-I just pushed him, I pushed him out the window and he fell and I think he might be dead, please God, Jack help-”

“Who, Will?” Jack yelled. Will could hear his bulk moving on the other end of the line as he ran somewhere. His boots echoed on the tile and Will recognised it. He was in Quantico. “I’m sending people, but where? Who kidnapped you?”

“It was him, Jack,” Will cried. “Hannibal! He's a *murderer*. He killed my dad.”

# Chapter 30

“Tell us again.”

“I told you,” Will said. His hands were unbound, and somehow that was worse. If he had been handcuffed to the table in the interrogation room, at least he wouldn’t have fidgeted so much. He could see his hands moving, scratching the cheap pale wood, fisting up, pulling at his loose scrubs. A nurse in the hospital had given him blue scrubs to wear, since his own clothes had been covered in Beau’s blood.

“Tell us again,” said Jack, once more. The scrubs were a little big. The nurse who had given them to him, she had been a big woman, almost six feet tall and wide as a door. She was firm with her heaviness, and graceful, like some huge bird. She had went and gotten him clean scrubs, and given them to him with a kindness that brought tears to his eyes. She had kept touching him as she bustled around, her long, dark fingers elegant and clean as she checked his pulse and flitted about him. Rosa, she told him to call her.

“Hannibal convinced me to stay with him during my leave. I didn’t think much of it, I thought it was nice. He let me out at first. I went to the grocery store. We took walks. It was normal. I don’t know, then it got… in hindsight I know there were strange things. He wouldn’t let me go into certain rooms in the house. He would lock my cell phone and laptop in a drawer in his desk. He said it was so I wouldn’t get distracted by work, I was supposed to be healing.

He told me to board my dogs. So, I did because we were supposed to be going to France. And our flight was supposed to be Tuesday morning. And Tuesday came, and he said the private plane was recharted for a medical emergency. I didn’t question it. And he kept telling me the flight was delayed, the weather was bad, the pilot was sick.

Thursday night, then… I don’t know, it seemed normal at the time. I can’t explain it, I just trusted him. I woke up and I heard noises, so I followed them. And upstairs, in the-” He trailed off, and allowed his eyes to unfocus slightly as he rested his gaze on the two-way mirror.

Alana Bloom was most likely behind it. He imagined briefly he was making eye contact with her and thought of her pity for him, her strength, her resilience. She would go to bat for him. But he had to convince her first. No easy feat, she and Hannibal had been close. But she had a softness for Will, a protective affection. It was doable, he could turn her from Hannibal if he could find his way into that dark red room of her heart-mind.

“Where, Will?” Jack pressed, and Will looked at him. Such a demanding, huge man. His presence swelled the whole room, his skin caught glimpses of yellow light from the bulbs as though he was not only born in an interrogation room, but made from it. There was another cop at the table, some agent he didn’t recognise. A tall, boxy woman in a grey pantsuit, with sheared blonde hair and thick mascara. Interrogations with two agents were standard,

although Jack didn't usually join in. But he had today, and Will decided to take that as a good sign.

"The guest bedroom," Will breathed and Jack inhaled and looked downward at the table, as though he was thinking hard. Will glanced at the two-way again, his eyes lidded slightly, his chin lowered to radiate shame. "I got in and...and I heard my dad. Hannibal had him tied to that- that wheelchair, and my dad was struggling.

I was confused and I yelled at Hannibal, I wanted to know what he was doing, but-" Will touched his neck, resting his fingertip against a small tender spot below his carotid.

"He stuck me with something and I must have passed out. When I woke up… My dad and I, we were both locked in there. I had ropes around my wrists, tying me to the wheelchair, too. We couldn't leave. I don't know how long we were there for. He brought water, and food, but he would make me stand by the door, the one that led out to the b-balcony, until he was finished.

He said if I moved, he'd hurt my dad. And I tried, anyway," he said, his voice catching hard in his throat. Abruptly he couldn't swallow, the salt-thick taste of tears boiling in his throat. "I tried to rush him when he brought water. And when-when I failed, he...he stabbed my dad. He said that my dad had encouraged me to run, so now he was gonna make sure he couldn't. He smashed his ankles in," Will whispered.

Jack's eyes were sharp, warm, and direct. Too attentive. Will wanted to swallow back the building tears, but he didn't want to display such a nervous gesture. In the hospital, Rosa, the nurse, had attended to the lacerations and rope burns around his wrists gently, but he had seen the shine of her eyes, the tiny glint of water. Now, he rested his hands on the table, allowed the bandages to catch Jack's eye.

"I know I should have done something before," he said, his voice low and self-loathing. "I should have broken the door to the balcony down, figured out a way down. Or ambushed Hannibal properly when he was bringing in water but-" he cast his eyes downward and allowed his breath to tremble in his chest. "I should have fought. But I didn't know he would… I just kept thinking 'he's going to realise any moment that something is wrong. He's going to realise that he's having some kind of psychotic break, and then he'll let us out and we'll be fine.' So, I didn't fight. I didn't want to h-hurt him," Will said, his breath hitching.

"It's ok, Will," Jack said gently. He reached out, though the other agent, the tall, blonde one watched with disagreement etched across her face. Jack held his arm, high up on the forearm, where there were no bandages, and squeezed comfortingly.

"It's alright, now. You did what you had to do. And he's gonna be fine," Jack said, a note of irritation in his voice, annoyance, as though Hannibal had broken direct orders by recovering well. "Broken legs, a few contusions, he'll be alright. You didn't kill him."

The tall agent was watching, and Will couldn't remember her name. Rowins? Rollins? Her short hair was gelled back, much like how Hannibal wore it to hunt. Disapproval radiated

from her.

“Though nobody would have blamed you if you had killed the son of a bitch,” Jack said, and Rowins grit her teeth, her mouth a thin line.

“Go on, Mr Graham,” Rowins said.

“Special Agent Graham,” Jack said.

“Mr Graham,” Rowins repeated. “Before you pushed Dr Lecter off the balcony. What happened before that?”

“It’s so… it seems so mixed-up now,” Will said, and wondered if he was laying it on too thick. The agent’s eyes were dry, her jawline tight. “He didn’t seem to realize anything was wrong,” Will said, firmly. “I had thought he would. But I think he thought he was helping me. He came in and - he started telling me he was going to free me and I was relieved at first. But that’s not what he meant. Instead, he… he killed him. He killed my father, while I watched. Then, he cut the ropes around my wrists, and he looked at me, like he expected me to-to thank him, or something. And I just-”

“How did the balcony door get open, Mr Graham?” Rowins demanded suddenly. The table was cold under Will's palms. He let it cool the sweat pooling there on his skin.

“He had opened it, that morning. What was I supposed to do, hoist my dad on my back and try climb down three storeys?”

“Of course not,” Jack said. Rowins twitched her head.

“Of course not,” she echoed, but her voice was tighter, almost smug. “Are you saying he left it open to tease you?”

“I don’t know,” Will said. “I’m not psychic.”

Rowins looked at him, a tiny hint of satisfaction on her sharp face and Will grit his teeth. Then he inhaled deeply, the stale air pushing down low into his diaphragm. He relaxed his jaw.

“He killed my father,” he said bluntly. “And I grabbed him and I pushed him off the balcony.”

“How did you get out of the room?” Rowins asked.

“I-what?”

“How did you get out of the room. The locked room. He did lock the door behind him, didn’t he? Did you take the time to snatch his keys before you shoved him off the balcony?”

“I’m-” Will looked from her to Jack and back again, but Jack was silent.

“He never locked the door behind him,” Will said. “He didn’t need to. I was tied to my father’s wheelchair.”

“Right,” said Rowins. “It’s lucky that he cut your ropes, isn’t it?”

“I really think he thought he was helping me,” Will said. “I don’t think he wanted to hurt me. I think he just wanted to get rid of my father. I think-”

“You sure do a lot of thinking, Mr Graham,” Rowins said. Her voice had a faint twang to it, a broad accent, like she had been raised in South Africa. Perhaps born there.

“That’s his job,” Jack said, testily.

“Yeah,” Rowins said softly. “It is, isn’t it?”

“Ask him your questions,” Jack advised. “Don’t just intimidate him. I don’t know about you but I’m thinking Will has probably had enough to deal with the past week, and I don’t intend on letting you manipulate some false confession out of him. I’m sure he feels guilty enough.”

“I do,” whispered Will.

“Fine,” Rowins said sharply. “Mr Graham, I think it’s immensely strange that you have had two killers fascinated enough with you to kill for you. Is there any chance that Hannibal Lecter could be the Chesapeake Ripper?”

“No,” Will said.

“No?” Rowins repeated.

“There was a Ripper kill during the week you were held captive, Will,” Jack said. “Could Hannibal have committed it?”

“When did it happen?”

“Tuesday night,” Jack said. “Well, early Wednesday morning.”

“That was before he locked me up,” Will whispered. “He couldn’t have.”

“Are you telling me that there is no chance-” Rowins started. Will interrupted her firmly.

“I’m telling you that before Thursday morning, we were still sleeping in the same bed. I am an insomniac. I would have noticed him leave. He is not the Ripper.”

Jack sat back then, and nodded slowly. Rowins exhaled, as though she were disappointed, and Will watched sharply as she scribbled something down.

“Fine,” Rowins said then, and the dismissiveness in her tone was disconcerting. “You’re free to go, but don’t leave town.”

“I thought cops only said that in the movies,” Will said snarkily and immediately regretted it.

Jack stood up, and Will joined him. Leaving the interrogation room felt like being reborn, blinking in the blinding natural light after the yellow fluorescence. The thick smell of dust and bad coffee still in his nose, Will thanked Jack, and then went to search for Alana Bloom.

He found her in the cafeteria, and when he joined her at the small table she rose and hugged him tightly.

“I’m so sorry,” she said, and the relief overwhelmed him so much that his knees weakened. “I should have - I don’t know how I didn’t see this happening.”

“It’s not your fault, Alana,” Will started.

“He was always crossing lines, Will! From pushing a relationship onto you when he had power over you, as your therapist, to insisting on your comfort animals being boarded- Will, I should have seen this coming. There are huge red flags that I just-I missed them. I don’t know how I could have been so blind. How could I have not seen that he was capable of this?”

“It’s him, Alana,” Will said, gently. “He is a master manipulator. You don’t ever know when he’s lying or telling the truth, everything, he twists it to suit himself. He’s so good at this. He’s so good at making people think he’s innocent,” Will says, and he can no longer distinguish whether he is talking about Hannibal or himself.

“I want to see him, Alana,” Will said later, over a huge mug of black coffee.

“I don’t know if that’s a good idea,” Alana said, a faint scoff in her voice. “He’s in the BSHCI right now. He’ll recuperate there until his trial date. He’s under the care of Frederick Chilton, Will. He’s away, he won’t hurt you anymore.”

“I need to see him, Alana,” Will repeated. “I need to ask him why.”

Alana was silent for a long time then, stirring sugar into her bad coffee and twisting the papers into tiny roses with her red-painted nails.

“It will be supervised,” Alana said finally and Will leaned back in his chair, and did his best to disguise his relief.

He is stupidly surprised to see Hannibal in a wheelchair. The white prisoner’s outfit fits him badly, and the bandage on his head is already pink with leaking blood. The wheelchair does not suit him. He looks contained, and large, as though there are tendrils of power reaching from his seated body outwards, touching everything in sight. He doesn’t look surprised to see Will.

The glass wall between them is polished clear enough that the lights above them reflect and catch, leaving two little yellow dots in Hannibal's dark eyes.

"I've come to see how you are," Will says, and Hannibal watches him, but doesn't speak.

Chilton had told him not to expect a conversation. Fiddling with his expensive little trinkets, his whole dark office smelling like furniture polish and new books, he had lectured Will on what to expect from Hannibal. He hadn't spoken since he had woken up, said Chilton. Not to anyone, not to the police who questioned him, not even to Chilton in therapy sessions, he had said, as though Hannibal had missed some great boon by not engaging him in conversation.

"I would like to ask you if you think you could ever forgive me," Will says, and his voice is even. There is no shake in his breath. If Hannibal says no, he will walk away from here and go somewhere he is wanted. Or he will go somewhere where nobody knows to want him.

Some tiny beach, perhaps, where he can repair boat motors for pennies and live in some ramshackle trailer that sprinkles drywall in his hair every time he shuts a door. There are cameras here, Will knows. They're hidden, yes, as are the tiny microphones that curl around the seams of the walls like tiny snakes and insects. They're illegal, yes, but they are here, nonetheless. Chilton will be watching right now.

"Have they caught the Ripper?" Hannibal asks, and there is a sick, pathetic relief in Will's stomach at the sound of his voice. "I read in the newspaper that there was another attack some time ago."

"They haven't caught him," Will says. "They're still looking."

"I see," Hannibal says. "I would ask if you could forgive me for my wrongs."

"Then," Will said. "It would seem we are both auribus teneo lupum."

"Both holding a wolf by the ears," Hannibal muses. "I suppose. I don't consider myself a wolf, however."

"What do you consider yourself?"

"I understand that I pushed you in ways you were not prepared for," Hannibal says. "And so I can only blame myself for not predicting your reaction. It is… It is difficult for me, occasionally, to understand that you will react to stimuli differently than I would to that very same stimuli. I suppose it is hard for me to separate us, at all."

"It is," Will agrees. He swallows abruptly, and his throat clicks, as though the tissues are swollen, dry. "They say I will have to testify at your trial."

"I see. Is there a date yet?"

"Three months, from tomorrow," Will says. "They are leaving you here to recover. After the trial, you'll be moved to a medium-high security prison. I expect they'll take you directly

from the courthouse to prison in a van, most likely."

"Most likely," Hannibal agrees, and Will knows he understands. Will is going to walk away from here. Hannibal will not. He knows that Hannibal sees them as one whole, but Will has spent too long being a part of someone else's whole. He is not ready to replace Beau with anyone. He will walk away from here, and he will be entirely alone, and out from anyone's influence for the first time in his life. Hannibal will heal, and away from Hannibal, so will he.

When they have spent time apart, when Will feels Hannibal is adequately punished, Hannibal will engineer an escape, most likely from the prison van Will has slipped into conversation.

"Why have they put me here, Will?" Hannibal asks, and Will knows, he hears the *you* in place of *they*, but he does not flinch.

"They think you deserve punishment. For what you've done," Will says. There is something in his voice that he doesn't recognise. "They think that you should be punished, that you have done unspeakable things, and you need to answer for them, in some small way."

"Hardly a small way," Hannibal says.

"Isn't it?" Will presses and Hannibal smiles at him, in that small, quirk of the eyebrows way that he expresses his approval.

"In the grand scheme of things," Hannibal says. "I suppose it would have happened sooner or later. This will change my life, however. Yours too."

"So, you don't forgive me?" Will asks.

"There is nothing to forgive," Hannibal says. "Corvus oculum corvi non eruit."

"Oh, you have latin, too?" Will says before he can think too hard, and he looks at Hannibal and expects a rebuke, perhaps in the form of cold silence. But Hannibal is not his father, and he does not deal punishment in the giving or removing of his attention. Hannibal smiles at him again, the edges of his mouth turned up. His gums are pink, a gentle neutral colour that somehow seems inappropriate.

"I have everything you do," Hannibal says gently, but firmly, as though it is a fact of the universe that all they have, they own together. Will rests his fingertips on that clean glass.

"Do you have the anger?" Will asks.

"No," Hannibal says softly. "That was always yours."

"Yes," Will says, and he recognises that tone in his own voice now. He can hear it, though he couldn't place it earlier, because he had never heard it from himself before. It is the sound of righteousness.

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